

University of Washington

Abstract

Leadership by Design:  
The Gendered Construction of Military (Air Force) Officers

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Grounding this study is the idea that the military constructs particular "norms" for its successful leaders and that these norms are officially and unofficially endorsed throughout a military officer's career. Specifically, the Air Force discursively constructs its ideal service member as a white, athletic, heterosexual, Christian male. Military texts that emphasize this norm (particularly the heterosexual and Christian aspects) conflate notions of national protection with levels of masculine prowess. Therefore, by gendered default, such discursive representations diminish women or entirely exclude them from the ultimate leadership scenario—war.

Narratives from the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) in Colorado Springs, Colorado, are the main evidence for this claim. As an institution invested in the fashioning of officers and their careers, USAFA's narratives play a crucial role in understanding how the military constructs gender. Taken alone, these narratives speak primarily to a military culture; yet, when they are considered along with representations of military women in relatively contemporary films, the military's gendered constructions also reach a non-military audience. Beyond USAFA and film contexts, this study turns to

military figures whose auto/biographies peak national interest because they either blatantly support the acceptable norms or flagrantly disrupt them.

This study, then, is a cultural reading of a variety of military narratives and how these narratives position women for leadership roles. How well military women navigate and negotiate the inherent tensions in attaining such positions will mean little until the military discursively shapes more than only one image.

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For My Mother  
Barbara Harrington

## Introduction

An upperclassman at the United States Air Force Academy, just two years older than I was, showed me how to fold my bras according to regulations, "Place the right cup into the left cup, tucking in the straps and make the cup seam smile." This anecdote along with other evidence, such as the issuing of male uniforms to women and the institution's refashioning of urinals as planters, emphasized that women were still a novelty at such training institutions. As the novelty wore off, many of these gender rough spots would work themselves out—or so women cadets had hoped. However, some fifteen years later I still experience the uneasy feeling of being present in the military but having my gender in tow. For example, Army personnel regularly answer their phones with a loud and thundering, "May I help you please, SIR!" There is no consideration or expectation that a military (or for that matter a civilian) woman could be calling them, despite the fact that, intellectually, Army personnel understand women serve in the armed forces.

Paradoxically, the military's charge to uphold constitutional tenets of equality is at odds with its assumptions about gender and, as a result, military women are displaced by one acceptable image of officership—the heterosexual, Christian male. Extreme forms of this displacement are often the basis for claims of sexual harassment. However, I am more interested in the discursive subtleties that go unchallenged but continue to shape and perpetuate the military norm as male. Discursive practices which mask these norms hold in place the "gender lie," which is "the notion that because intentions are 'good' and standards are 'gender-blind,' there cannot be any gendered tension in the military except pathological thinking of female malcontent."<sup>1</sup> My manuscript, "Leadership by Design," exposes this tension by way of cultural study that considers how the military discursively

constructs gender<sup>2</sup> at the expense of military women. Before outlining my strategy, let me briefly discuss the relevance of this topic to a non-military audience, particularly an academic one. The relationship between the military and society is typically united in times of conflict and indifferent in times of peace. In many ways, such fair weather citizenship potentially casts military life as either a microcosm of society or as an undesirable and misunderstood faction. However, I believe the greater truism is the former. Not only is the military a microcosm of society, but it is a sub-culture super-charged to support the tenets of our national identity: freedom, equality, and justice.

In some cases the military outdoes itself in supporting its charge. The fact that military members look the same because of their uniforms and get paid the same as a result of standardized pay scales (based on military rank and time in service) precludes many of the discriminatory practices more commonly found in society. However, the military does not keep pace with society concerning gender issues. Military women remain marginalized within military culture because, discursively, they are taught along with men that to succeed as a leader means to succeed as a masculine one. Let me echo Judith Hicks Stiehm's comment during a recent campus visit. She reminded her audience that military members frequently retire in their early forties and continue on in other (non-military) careers. There is every likelihood that attitudes coming out of military ideology find their way into aspects of civilian society. Let us hope gender is not one of them.

Foremost this is a study about the discursive construction of gender for Air Force officers. I have selected the Air Force not only because it is the service with which I am intimately familiar but also because the Air Force, as the newest service, has proven to be



the most generous towards women. I have also narrowed the field of military personnel considerably by focusing on the officer corps because officers steer the most significant policy issues. The texts I refer to and analyze may seem straightforward to an academic audience, but my purpose is also to expose these readings to military personnel who would have a more difficult time undoing what has been foundational to their construction.

These texts are also discourses of power in the sense that such power limits and often downright excludes the presence of military women. Each chapter juxtaposes the military's stereotypical discursive norms with (non-) opportunities for military women to share similar discursive spaces. Therefore, each of the chapters I introduce below enters a somewhat different academic conversation but locates the same exit—uncovering how military narratives limit leadership opportunities for women serving in the armed forces. I refer you then to each chapter for those specific conversations, keeping in mind that no conversation is an exact fit for my topic.

Certainly, as a subject the military easily lends itself to study, and women in the military have indeed been subject to on-going debates which question their level of fighting readiness. And, other conversations that theorize the military's over-identification with the masculine have, by default, exposed the degree to which military service cordons off women from combat. Yet, primarily because there has not been a sustained presence of military women who have been subject to the discursive shaping of military leadership, the particular conversation I introduce here could not have existed previously. In many ways, then, my theorizing of officers' (gendered) discursive formation within the military covers new ground; but, undoubtedly, my effort relies at the

same time on long established dialogues of canon formation, language, gender and how these overlapping interests construct normative cultural codes.

These codes have a marked resonance within the military--a subculture complete with issues of race and class, and steeped in its own traditions, linguistic codes, and ethical norms. On one hand, the military exists as our nation's corporate melting pot--inherently diversified because the military is geographically borderless, and its members typically rotate assignments every three to four years. On the other hand, the military has a singularly distinctive identity because uniformed personnel agree to follow stringent professional, ethical, and moral codes. These standards of conduct are governed by their own laws (the Uniform Code Of Military Justice), are applicable all day, every day, and include as part of the job description a willingness to die for one's country. The burden of adhering to these codes falls first and foremost on the officer corps. All military services require their officers to lead—to lead troops, to lead in policy and decision-making, and to lead by example. Therefore, lessons on leadership cultivate and, through their repetition, sustain aspects of military identity. I am interested in how this singular identity, leadership, reveals itself in various narratives, particularly how these narratives speak to and about women.

As a contemporary cultural study, the chapters comprising this dissertation are rooted in the late '70s through the '90s. In some ways this temporal partitioning truncates women's early military contributions in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries as well as women's more formal World War II contributions via the WASPs (Women Air Service Pilots) and the WAFs (Women's Auxiliary Ferries). My intent, however, with a more contemporary focus is to address the presentation of women in the military once they

have become a reality, supporting what has become a common social observation that backlash is strongest once women realistically threaten the status quo. Also, keeping the timeframe relatively contemporary more readily links the different genres taken up within each chapter (from undergraduate canon to auto/biography to film), thereby securing a multi-dimensional perspective that otherwise would not be possible. The only exception I make to this non-historicizing is in Chapter 4 where I provide a brief introduction to Rousseau's concept of Civil Religion. Rousseau is not the subject of the chapter, but his ideological influence provides a necessary frame to my discussion of the religious overtones in contemporary military texts that are resurrected in national discourses. Religion, then, unlike the other military norms (male and heterosexual) that I challenge, is inextricably linked to its historic specificity. Also, despite this manuscript's contemporary focus on military texts, I have not selected any particular (recent) military conflict as a backdrop. So although I mention the Gulf War and Kosovo, these engagements do not bound my arguments in the way that, for example, Vietnam became a definitive lens for various cultural studies.

My emphasis in Chapter One, "Reading the Right Stuff," is on what kind of ideology the military canon, which I have defined as those texts comprising the Air Force's professional reading list and the war literature common to the three military service academies, establishes for Air Force officers, particularly for women. How did officership come to be coded as 'male,' and more importantly, what kinds of discursive texts and teaching practices keep this coding in place? In reviewing narratives that reinforce the military's inextricable link between textual content and value, I argue that military canons place no value in women. Instead, they form an ideology where women

are discursively absent, shut out, or diminished within military culture by one stereotypical leadership norm—a heterosexual, religious male. Such gender-coded lessons literally close down leadership opportunities for women.

Chapter Two, “Pop Goes the Unofficial Canon: Disrupting the Military ‘Norm,’” focuses on the disruption of Air Force stereotypical norms by way of unofficial texts. From among the myriad of unofficial texts, texts not sanctioned within military channels, I have selected the auto/biographies of four military women (Kelly Flinn, Kara Hultgreen, Margarethe Cammermeyer, and Rhonda Cornum) and one homosexual man (James Kennedy) as potential disruptions of the far more traditional military narrative embodied in Norman Schwarzkopf’s autobiography. In many ways, the military women speaking out via these texts undo the military’s pre-fabricated norms that allow for only one kind of military hero—a straight male. Yet, in other (disappointing) ways, these women become the stereotypical females they do not want to be. Although I understand that these women bear the burden of telling their story in ways that sell to the public and that circumstances out of their control may have influenced what their texts capture, my comments are directed to the texts as written.

The emergence of military women’s image in the media motivates Chapter Three, “Gendered Resistance in Pop Culture Television/Film,” in which I trace the various stages of women’s rather rapid, although long overdue, evolution in film. It is only within the last twenty years that a society previously grounded in the idea of military women as nurses (caretakers) has been witness to images from Private Benjamin to GI Jane. These films have done more to shape attitudes and perceptions about women who

serve in the armed services than any text. Specifically, in categories I term the sexualized nurse, the incapable girl, the capable mom, soldier as woman, and the resistant woman, pop culture's media images harness a potential for military women that has yet to be recognized within the armed forces.

In my final Chapter, "Our Father in Uniform," I discuss the power of religious narratives within military discourse to embrace sacrifice. Specifically, death, as the ultimate sacrifice, is only viewed as such when occasioned by men. Therefore, the power of sacrificial death precludes acknowledging women as military equals. I believe the battlefield, constructed in military discourse as a religious, sacred ground, creates a religious platform from which the "unconsecrated" woman is barred. Narratives incorporated into this religious platform are prevalent in training practices at the Air Force Academy and include such fundamental scripts as The Air Force Hymn, John Gillespie Magee Jr's poem "High Flight," and POW experiences. Because such narratives find their way into the ceremonial routines of military culture, the performances and repetition of them construct not only an obedient military mind, but also one markedly absent of women. Discursively women are present but never (ever) paraded on sacred ground.

While women have existed in war narratives in limited ways, they have not been reworked into the basic identity of a military leader. My aim in this manuscript is to open up the ways in which women can be and should be included in leadership by design. There is hope. In July of this year, Eileen Collins will be the first woman to command a shuttle flight, the Columbia. No woman ever piloted a shuttle until 1995.<sup>3</sup> And local papers report telling graduation statistics: "The No. 1 graduate at the Naval Academy this

year was a woman, as was No. 2, not to mention Nos. 4, 6, and 9. Half of the top 10 Naval Academy graduates were women.”<sup>4</sup> Also, this year the Citadel graduated its first female in 156 years (“42 women now attend [the] military school that was an all-male bastion”<sup>5</sup>). These military women can add new meaning to one verse of the Air Force Song, for they will “be there followed by more.”

## Notes to Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Billie Mitchell, "The Creation of Army Officers and the Gender Lie: Betty Grable or Frankenstein," *It's Our Military Too! Women and the U.S. Military*. Ed. Judith Hicks Stiehm (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> I use Miriam Cooke's definition of gender: "gender far from being natural, is a cultural code that describes, prescribes, and thus shapes social expectations for sexed bodies: men and women grow up differently, and most act in ways consonant with their culture's prevalent mages and values." This definition appears in her essay, "Subverting the Gender and Military Paradigms" in collected works of Judith Hicks *Stiehm's It's Our Military Too!* (cited above).

<sup>3</sup> *The News Tribune* March 13, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> *The News Tribune* May 27, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> *The News Tribune* May 3, 1999.

## Chapter I: Reading the Right Stuff

“WAR IS PEACE / FREEDOM IS SLAVERY / IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH”

—George Orwell, 1984

Among the 1999-bookshelf specials offered by America's Women in Military Service Memorial Foundation is *Cooks in Cadence*, a book with “more than 600 recipes from Charter members and friends of the Memorial.” Ironically, the Memorial Foundation offers this stereotypically domestic female genre along side atypical military texts such as *Faithful and Fearless: Moving Feminist Protest inside of the Church and Military* and *In Defense of a Nation: Servicewomen in World War II*. Clearly the cookbook is inconsistent with the Foundation's otherwise pro-women's book list. Let me add that within military culture, cookbooks are typically compiled by members of the Officers' *Wives* Club. So not only does the cookbook conflate women's stereotypical domestic roles with women's military accomplishments, but it also presupposes military women as the domestic descendents of officers' wives. In other words, these military women may not look like traditional officer's wives, but fear not, they can still cook like them. How is it that a foundation dedicated to preserving the memory of military women's accomplishments would miss the way in which *Cooks in Cadence* undermines their purpose? I believe the oversight contributes to and results from gendered attitudes that have entrenched themselves in various pedagogies, particularly the military's (leadership-gendered) canons and, as a result, servicewomen, who are discursively formed by such gendered canons, maintain ideological connections to stereotypically female roles (wife, mother, caretaker, and cook). Conversely, servicemen subject to the same canon can identify with new and improved masculine images that wars (without



women) define and validate. Indeed, women may now wear armor, but, discursively, they have not lost their aprons.

Certainly cookbooks in and of themselves are not preeminent concerns on feminist agendas, but as indicators of broader gendered issues, they should be. In what Alleen Pace Nilsen terms the "cult of the apron," women and girls wearing aprons dominate illustrations in children's literature.<sup>1</sup> Women-in-apron images also exist outside of domestic space and appear just as often in stories of animal characters who are mothers. Nilsen's point is that these books offer only one acceptable image of womanhood, if they provide one at all. Granted, women were typically identified with domestic images between 1951 and 1970, but as Nilsen's research shows, the percentage of girls pictured in books steadily decreased during this time,<sup>2</sup> which suggests that in addition to domestic stereotypes women's limited and dwindling representation is also a problem. I call attention to the messages propagated within children's literature because this is the first canon through which many individuals experience gendered expectations discursively. For many in society these initial gendered messages dissipate within or give way to subsequent learning environments. However, for service members who internalize the military's hyper-masculinized canon, childhood's gendered distinctions hold fast. It is no coincidence that childhood narratives of male heroes closely parallel models of leadership in the military's official canon, one that at best makes exceptions for women and at worst overlooks them completely.

Although I will briefly consider how heroic stories influence ideas about gender, my emphasis in this chapter is on what kind of ideology the military canon establishes for Air Force officers, particularly for women. Because women do not dominate military literary

canons (an understatement!), much of this chapter will address textual absence rather than presence. However, I will show that military culture fashions officer presence via a series of norms: first and foremost this norm is male and, typically, a white-athletic-heterosexual-Christian male. Not only do military canons discursively keep this norm in place, but, as I will discuss, these canons also become incestuous political breeding grounds for their own gendered discourse. In the rare instances when women are textually present, gendered teaching methods preclude discussions of them, particularly in leadership roles. Although mine is predominately an inverted study (or one that works in negative space), it does locate the crucial, but unfortunate, role discursive formation plays in official military canons—one that hinders women's development as leaders.

Cultural norms have long cast military leaders as men and military service as masculine, and such norms have been absorbed by and reflected in scholarly criticism. Indeed, notions of masculinity in war motifs have dominated academic interests in military culture—certainly, America's history borne by the Civil War, both World Wars, Vietnam, the Gulf War, and most recently the Kosovo crisis has provided tragic but ample subjects for academic study. Women have long been part of these engagements, but they have struggled to share the opportunities and recognition of America's servicemen. In this struggle military women are doubly challenged, facing careers not only dominated by men but also actually defined by them. It is not just that men have been afforded greater opportunities in this profession as a matter of circumstance, but rather that the military profession is defined by stereotypical masculine traits of aggression and physical prowess. Fortunately, with the backing of feminists and equal rights proponents, military women have not had to wage this civil war of gender alone.

Largely because the military is a microcosm of society and, therefore, one that readily lends itself to multi-disciplined analyses, the military's gender issues have found a place in cultural studies. Critics such as Cynthia Enloe, Susan Jeffords, and Judith Hicks Stiehm (among others) and their theories about masculine notions of identity have exposed gender-biased thinking and have underscored what it means for military women to be "in the men's house."<sup>3</sup> My intent is to locate a new point of origin for this discussion, starting namely with the reading materials that shape and are shaped by the military's hyper-masculinized norm. Theories about the canon's effect on officer candidates, I believe, must come from within the military because the canonical materials serve two purposes: academic and behavioral. In other words, the academic lessons are internalized in ways that outside observers could, but for the actual military experience, easily miss. Although military women previously have spoken about life at military academies and life in the military, none has theorized about how military texts (literature taught within military culture) subvert women's presence. Therefore, in many ways, theorizing officers' (gendered) discursive formations within military curricula covers new ground; but, my effort relies at the same time on long established dialogues of canon formation, language, gender and how these overlapping interests construct normative cultural codes.

In *Gendering War Talk's* selected essays, Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott address two of these interests: gender and language. As they suggest in the text's postscript, their guiding question considers how "war was propagated through gendered representations and within a discourse of gender roles and behavior."<sup>4</sup> While their text deserves strong acclaim, their collection of essays only addresses canon formation

indirectly. I suspect this is so because in some ways such discussion might seem passé—a rehashing of previously established gender debates within other academic curricula. For example, in 1971 Elaine Showalter's "Women and the Literary Curriculum" argued for a literary curriculum that would include "consideration of the woman writer, the image of women in literature, and the literary treatment of feminism."<sup>5</sup> Such revisions, as she had hoped at the time, would challenge the privileging of the masculine point of view and allow women to identify with their own experience and perspective. Many accepted her challenge and classes devoted to women's literature started to appear throughout academia. And so it began. Yet, even today, this conversation is not as passé as it might initially appear, for while Showalter's essay proved to be a catalyst for necessary changes in academic curricula, women have yet to witness a similar evolution within military culture.

Central to the military canon is the professional reading list (Appendix A)<sup>6</sup> established by the previous Air Force Chief of Staff, General Ronald R. Fogleman. Via this list, senior leadership for the first time formally suggested supplemental reading for officers' education. The majority of these texts, which underpin military ideology, are texts that "all good officers" should read. In fact, many of them reappear on reading lists in various required Professional Military Education (PME) courses (ones which officers complete throughout their careers). Yet, many of these professional readings do not traditionally qualify as academic material. So, in addition to the reading list, I will consider literature within academic environments, in this case course texts at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) at Colorado Springs. Although I will also refer to academic curricula at the United States Naval Academy (USNA) at Annapolis and the

United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, my focus is on constructions of gender within the Air Force.

The various officership grooming practices at these military academies attest to the fact that each branch of the armed service leads according to its specific mission. Despite the differing nature of these missions however, there is a compelling discursive similarity in each service's academic training--a curriculum whose emphasis is on mastering first leadership theory and then practice. Consequently, differences occur primarily in how these theories are cultivated, for example, which texts will be taught when and whether the texts will be assigned as required reading by all cadets, plebes, and midshipmen, or simply remain course specific. Curricula at these service academies offer leadership lessons in a wide variety of courses; however, my focus here is on literature, primarily classes in war literature, because, I believe such course texts most directly establish norms of leadership and influence ideas about gender. War scenarios afford men crucial leadership opportunities and, men, therefore, retain the military's highest cultural capital. Because the majority of military men opt not to risk such capital (power) by positively entertaining women's battlefield presence, war and the literature surrounding it has been a gated-community for the masculine. My discussion about war's gender bias and other by-products of the military's literary canon concentrates on how this *canon forms* officers, not particularly on how military canons get formed.

Let me speculate that one reason that academic interest in the military's discursive formation has been lacking is that service members are widely perceived as having specific, albeit dangerous, technical skills (flying military aircraft, shooting various weaponry) and, as such, possess unique but limited "training-only" perspectives.

However, held in place by military texts is an ideology that surpasses the mastering of skill sets. As George Dillon claims in *Contending Rhetorics*, professional training actually involves much more than rote learning; he urges that we recognize “professional training not merely as initiation into arcane mysteries and jargon, or apprenticeship in guild crafts and practices, but as the process of acquiring the norms of the culture and the tact, taste, and judgment to apply them.”<sup>7</sup> Dillon’s comment applies to many professions and their respective curricula. However, military culture absorbs his observation with a gravity that other professions cannot. Because the military’s highly disciplined profession is also situated squarely on America’s basic litany of freedom, democracy, and patriotism (a patriotism that is worth dying for), military canons not only develop professional skills but mandate ideological expectations commensurate with this litany. In other words, few professions *base* success and accountability on personal values such as integrity and sacrifice, notions of family, or one’s sexuality, and even fewer disciplines have canons bounded by such discourses.

Another crucial difference between military and civilian professions is that the military ensures that its (promotable) members periodically receive professional training via various educational programs. Unlike many other professions, required military schools are not merely opportunities for career enrichment but are career determinants. Texts on the Air Force’s reading list, for example, are foundational texts for many Professional Military Education (PME) courses.

Even without delving into the specifics of military history, policy, and strategy, which the majority of texts represent, the reading lists’ overall composition reflects two biases: political and gender. Politically, the military canon reasserts its dominant

Republican Party interests by assigning the (least popular) democratic texts, such as John F. Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage*, to the military's non-commissioned officers and (the most) junior commissioned officers. These heavily populated lower military ranks are also the least powerful within the military's leadership structure. Although it is true that senior non-commissioned officers (SNCOs) advise commissioned officers, SNCOs' first priority is to ensure the morale and welfare of the enlisted force they represent; therefore, they are removed from high-level political agendas. Those texts that could be construed as representative of the Democratic Party (even if that representation is historical) disappear from senior commanding officers' suggested readings.

More central to my argument is how the military's gendered norm, similar to its political one, is reinforced in the military canon. In addition to democratic texts, junior officers who are new to leadership demands also read books such as DeWitt Copp's *A Few Great Captains* and Robinson Risner's *Passing of the Night*. Both provide model heroes and leaders—male only. When considering gender, it is true that junior ranks have limited political power; however, in terms of numbers alone, their influence cannot be underestimated. The military practice repeatedly underscores its masculine norm in a way it does not need to for its political norm, which presumes a military member's political party blindness in favor of following a "chain of command." Gender considerations are not so well masked. Therefore, the canonical influence has a higher probability of leaving a lasting gendered impression. The reading list's textual accounts of leadership model it as masculine, a gendered expectation that resonates in military consciousness and recycles in the military canon. Ultimately, the heroic male who presents himself as a POW, an astronaut, or a senior general officer reinforces military

notions of leadership as masculine. Given this politically incestuous and intellectually limited structure, it would be surprising indeed for texts on the Air Force's reading list to discuss military women or for any of them to even be written by women. Indeed, the professional reading list, which was first released on February 7, 1997, sadly offers *no* surprises.

The list's release once again showed military women the dubious reality of their power(less) positions. Either they trust organizations such as the Women In Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, the example with which I began this chapter, and accept the imbedded stereotypes that undermine their image, or they turn away from organizations and look to successful military women. With the military's "tongue-in-cheek" sanctioning, such model organizations and individuals create empathetic environments--political safe houses--for military women. Yet, paradoxically, these apparently supportive forums are also the ones that inhibit or remain blind to military women's experiences. One high-ranking supporter of women in the military, and as such a positive individual model for all women, was the first woman Secretary of the Air Force, the Honorable Shelia E. Widnall. However, disappointingly, her efforts on behalf of women in the military have fallen on deaf ears. Just two years *prior* to the release of the Air Force's official canon, Widnall delivered a speech entitled "From WAFs to Warriors: A Reflection of Women in the United States Air Force," lauding, ironically, how far military women have come:

We're seeing a shattering of the military glass ceiling, or glass canopy, as we say in the Air Force, that limited women of earlier generations. Across DOD [Department of Defense], President Clinton's administration has made historic



progress in bringing women into senior positions. As women move into these leadership positions they provide role models and encouragement for others to follow. And that brings me to what I see as the biggest challenge for military women of the future: securing and succeeding in leadership positions.<sup>8</sup>

Realizing Secretary Widnall's vision, some military women are "securing and succeeding in leadership positions"; yet, they do so hampered significantly by a military canon that ideologically denies their presence. As a result, "women-firsts," through no fault of their own, represent tokens and exceptions, not realistic models that the majority of military women can emulate. The Air Force canon remains impenetrable and immune to comments by powerful women. Until military education incorporates women into its coveted academic conversation on issues such as war, strategy, policy, and leadership, Widnall's "glass canopy" remains decidedly shatterproof.

For many military officers this academic conversation begins during their undergraduate education at the military's service academies: the Air Force Academy, West Point, and Annapolis.<sup>9</sup> The English departments at each of these academies were willing to share with me various course syllabi from their war literature classes and/or other texts guiding their "core" courses, those courses required to be taken by all officer candidates. From the United States Air Force Academy I refer to syllabi from English 484, "The Literature of the Vietnam War" (Spring 1997 and 1998); English 311, "Advanced Composition and Speech" (English 311 is a required core course); and, a newly proposed course offering by USAFA's History Department, "Women in War." Although the latter syllabus is still being drafted, I also call attention to an upcoming course offered jointly by USAFA's History and English departments for Fall 1999, AS

495N, "America on Screen: the War Film," because it devotes at least one lesson to women in war. Syllabi from the United States Military Academy include English 374, "The Arts of War" (Spring 1996 and 1997) as well as a master list of textbooks required for Spring 1998-1999. The English Department at the United States Naval Academy provided its Freshman Composition and Literature syllabus (no course number listed) and HE462, "Literature of the Vietnam War" (1997-1998). Also, the Naval Academy recently had a war literature course approved as part of its regular curriculum (and, therefore, required by all midshipmen), but it has not yet been offered as part of the Naval Academy's course selections.

These syllabi mean little without an understanding of the teaching environment in which they are imbedded, particularly in this discussion because the power and control issues of military regimen are so closely allied with constructions of gender. As one might well imagine, military school environments are highly structured. Instructors teaching core courses adhere to one master syllabus that allows them to choose their own texts only for a limited number of lessons (noted in the syllabi as "IO" for "Instructor Option"). Yet, and here I address only the Air Force Academy's methods, course directors responsible for planning the core courses as well as senior seminars have a high degree of autonomy in selecting their course texts. There are no set criteria for how particular texts get on course lists; it is purely up to the discretion of the course director. I might add that course directors are senior military personnel (some hold the rank of Major but more commonly the higher rank of Lieutenant Colonel) and that men traditionally occupy this upper echelon. Therefore, senior (male) leadership is the most responsible for the discursive formation of its junior members. Since Department Heads

at the Air Force Academy are permanent military positions held by officers until retirement, these senior leaders are often in place for extended periods of time. In the last *forty* years, for example, the English Department at the Air Force Academy has only had two academic chairs, both men. In fact, it was only as recently as the 1998-99 school year that the Air Force Academy appointed its first two military women as Department Head and Acting Department Head in any of its academic disciplines. My contention (and life experience) is that the canon suggested by these syllabi and held in place by its male-dominated leadership falls far short of affording any kind of positive discursive space for women as leaders.

In *Cultural Capital*, John Guillory theorizes the rationale behind canon formation, particularly how subgroups, such as women, are excluded and what exclusionary practice says about social identity and cultural values.<sup>10</sup> Specifically, in his chapter, "Canonical and Noncanonical: The Current Debate," Guillory claims that modes of social identity (race, gender, class) are not the basis for selection or exclusion of minority literature in the contemporary canon.<sup>11</sup> Instead, he finds that "the complexity of the historical circumstances," such as women's limited access to literacy in the eighteenth-century, is more sufficient "to explain the lack of canonical status."<sup>12</sup> Guillory acknowledges gender as one "*factor*" among many motivating canonical revision, but, on its own, gender cannot serve as a "*general* criterion of exclusion."<sup>13</sup> In other words, because social identities exist within historical circumstance, issues of canonical status judged solely on these criteria are severely limited. His point is that "the historical process of canon formation . . . is too complex to be reduced to determination by the single factor of the social identity of the author."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, to fully comprehend the political work

accomplished by a text, Guillory asks us to "extend the critique of the canon from the category of social identity to the category of *cultural value*."<sup>15</sup>

Certainly, if one accepts any kind of historical specificity, this facet of Guillory's argument has merit. His point revisits Jane Tompkins' earlier contention, which Guillory echoes, that women's absence from the eighteenth and nineteenth century literary canon cannot be attributed to gender alone.<sup>16</sup> Yet, Guillory himself errs within the context of his own historical critique. He assumes falsely that his and Tompkins' arguments, which address specific historical periods, rebound as relevant criticism for the contemporary canon. The extension does not work in reverse. This is 1999. It should go without saying that today's women have access to literacy not imaginable for women of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And, as a result, canonical judgments based on gender are even more relevant to the contemporary canon. Although Guillory suggests that there are other mitigating criteria that interfere with judging the canon on the basis of social identity, he offers only "access to literacy" as the rationale against gendered evaluations. His point--that "the historical process of canon formation . . . is too complex to be reduced to determination by the single factor of the social identity of the author"--dilutes the powerful constructs social identities are in today's far more literate world.<sup>17</sup>

Guillory also diminishes the importance attached to literary canons and questions the political motivations of (canonical vs. noncanonical) judgments which are made according to "*institutional agendas*."<sup>18</sup> He believes that these complexities so sully the canonical process that "the selection of texts never represents merely the consensus of a community of readers, either dominant or subordinate."<sup>19</sup> While I essentially agree with

his points concerning institutional canons, Guillory's contentions are wholly problematic within the context of military culture. Ironically, he acknowledges this vulnerability indirectly by describing an "*imaginary scene . . . in which a group of readers, defined by a common social identity and common values, confronts a group of texts with the intention of making a judgment as to canonicity.*"<sup>20</sup> For Guillory, this imaginary scene is the only way judgment and textual reproduction have any force within interpretative communities. Essentially, Guillory stakes his argument on the premise that this type of community does not exist. However, professional military education recasts this image as a reality. Officer candidates actually do possess a common social identity and common values. They must. In fact, the common nature of this identity, leadership, is held in place by adhering to values such as integrity, duty, and professionalism. Examples of how military texts cultivate such values, in effect creating a social/moral expectation as part of a service member's job, are discussed below in terms of specific texts. Of importance here is that these common values are not just suggestions; they are communal expectations reflected in military teaching. Therefore, the majority of Guillory's comments are incomplete because military schools provide exactly the kind of environment that he only imagines and thereby discounts.

In effect, the unique environment of the military and the social/moral dimension of its educational process are more effectively addressed by theorists Guillory bypasses, such as Barbara Herrnstein Smith. Smith's *Contingencies of Value* "argues that works cannot become canonical unless they are seen to endorse the hegemonic or ideological values of dominant social groups."<sup>21</sup> Her straightforward observation lends credence to social identity (race, gender, and class) as a canonical discriminator, while Guillory's

claim suspends the power of such identity and emphasizes instead cultural capital. Isn't it true, however, that the exchange value of such capital originates in and is borne by race, gender, and class? Even if race, gender, and class are not as closely linked to cultural capital as I believe they are in contemporary society, within military culture they are one and the same. Social identity and cultural capital are synonymous. More specifically, masculine gender and cultural capital are the military's political bedfellows. Although the military has addressed the barriers imbedded within class and race, gender remains a formidable hurdle (for women). War has not always been ascribed to the rich, poor, or ethnic minorities, but it has had a long-standing relationship to men and constructions of the masculine. In such an environment, Smith's point about the influence of hegemonic and ideological dominance rings particularly true because cultural capital collapses around one social identity, the military masculine.

The military masculine does not eradicate the presence of servicewomen, but it does cloud it. Women are present in the military but only in ways that allow male codes of leadership to flourish. Occasionally, political apertures, allowing some of these women the opportunity to be "women-firsts"; however, as I mentioned earlier, these women are also often the exceptions that prove the rule. How can "women-firsts" begin to be truly representative of opportunity instead of being gender magnets for negative criticism? Locating the point of women's discursive absence within the Air Force canon, military courses, and even childhood constructions is a start. However, the larger conversation would extend and apply this canonical review against the skewed power dynamics between political and social identities.

Again, because military culture is in many ways a microcosm of society and in other

ways wholly unique, understanding gender within such dynamics poses a significant challenge. Peter Osborne's discussion of identity politics is not grounded in the military; yet his comments aptly depict the predicament of so many military women: "oppressed social identities are transformed *directly* into oppositional political identities through a celebration of difference which inverts the prevailing structure of value but leaves the structure of differences untouched."<sup>22</sup> Osborne's observation is readily transferable to military women; they are the service's oppressed social identities. Also true is that emerging from women's reform efforts within the military's stringent masculine politics was a new women's political identity, "Femme-Nazis" or "Nazi-femme-bitches."<sup>23</sup> The derogatory name itself attests to the inversion of value structures. Women can only be strong and assertive if they are imagined as militant Nazis. Men, on the other hand, maintain stereotypical masculine strength while also being permitted the softer, stereotypically feminine traits such as compassion and understanding—traits taught by military courses as essential to leadership. In a military context, inverting the prevailing structure of value, when what is valued is the masculine gender, serves only to reinforce more commonly held notions of double standards. This is the pretext for "women-firsts," who are discursively "set-up" by structures of difference that remain "untouched." When military women's issues become politically charged, politics serves only to redefine values without systemically altering the original structures of difference. Exceptions to the rules do not change the rules. However, because these rules and attitudes are based in military canon, there is the opportunity for systemic redress.

Previously, I listed a number of syllabi from various literature courses at the military service academies. Judgements about the discursive formation of military officers based

on analysis of these syllabi initially seem limited. After all, it should come as no surprise that literature classes, particularly war literature classes offered at military undergraduate institutions, circulate popular titles such as *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Catch-22*, and *The Red Badge of Courage*. These texts, read even at the high school level, do not in and of themselves generate soldier-citizens. But, they do directly and indirectly promote negative female images. Female characterizations of malicious nurses and prostitutes such as *Catch-22*'s Nurse Duckett and Natelly's whore do not caricature women, but directly imagine these fictitious women as their non-fictitious counterparts. In other words, these women have not strayed from a positive gendered image; their free-form corruption, unlike the male characters', exists as an innate state of being and not one constrained or caused by the war. Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* suggests then that all women are bad girls and bad girls are always toxic to military men. Similar negative impressions of women occur indirectly through war scenarios that consistently represent fear, weakness, sexual vulnerability, and cowardice as feminine even when women never appear in the text. For example, in Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* a simple song creates women's subjugation: "A dog, a woman, an' a walnut tree, / Th' more yeh beat 'em, th' better they be!"<sup>24</sup> Military institutions responsible for discursively forming officers might well challenge the selection and teaching of texts which repeatedly project the feminine as an object for physical and sexual abuse (directly or indirectly) and as the only gender embodying fear and cowardice. Instead, however, military culture more often than not tacitly accepts these skewed perspectives as the norm. Although individual texts do not make or break cultural stereotypes, military canons that offer only negative images of women discursively foster palpable sites of gendered resistance against women



in the military.

As mentioned earlier, individual academic course directors select the majority of the reading material, so it also initially appears problematic to draw any general conclusions about the selection of specific readings. Yet, the unusual teaching environment of a military academy can not be discounted. Unlike at most other universities, pedagogy assumes a particularly hegemonic discursive force at undergraduate military institutions where opportunities for change are particularly infrequent. Stagnation occurs for a number of reasons: senior faculty members serve in long term appointments, instructors teach required "core" classes from a uniform syllabus, and faculty exchanges between the three service academies' English Departments unearth and intellectually recycle the same body of texts. These male-dominated leadership's legacies, full of military lore, heroic myths, and battlefield horrors, sculpt future "Stormin'" Norman Schwarzkopfs. Therefore, given this inflexible structure, just replacing particular course texts will not unravel the canonical masculine knots. The texts, how they are taught, and the environment they are taught in all reinforce a singular acceptable identity for the soldier--masculine.

At the discursive center of the military's leadership legacy are those texts common to the Air Force Academy, West Point, and Annapolis. Such literature is foundational to military ideology because it cultivates an expectation of, if not an on-going attraction to, the military profession which tactics and strategy alone do not. Because military service grounds itself in "defending" and "preserving" fundamental human rights, much of the literature the academies select to teach underscores basic American values. Therefore, military canonical texts not only contribute to a profession, but they also build America's

history in the corporate memory of these soldier-scholars. Markedly absent and discounted from this story are women, who have been included only as separate and unequal subjects for the military's academic classrooms. Unfortunately, the long-standing praise afforded to masculine-only war literature so entrenches its canonical standing that the ways in which many of these texts shut out women rarely motivates canonical change. The canonical selections discussed below are not representative of the spectrum of war literature, nor are they indicative of each service's nuances, but they are illustrative of how military women are discursively missing in action.

I have selected three texts common to the military academies' English Departments: Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), Donald Anderson's *Aftermath* (1995), and Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* (1990). Fussell's text is taught at the Air Force Academy and at West Point. Based on its exhaustive research and rigorous scholarship alone, this 1975 text remains central to course discussion in a number of academic fields; yet, its canonical preeminence does not absolve it of critique. In "Thinking Bayonets," Lynne Hanley acknowledges Fussell's text as foundational to the canon of war literature; however, she claims that such status is also incestuously blinding: "studies of the literature of war which have appeared since Fussell's have either added to his canon a list of like-minded authors and texts from World War II and Vietnam, or challenged his choice of soldiers' stories, but few have questioned his fundamental premises and strategies for recollecting war."<sup>25</sup> Hanley's list of objections about *The Great War and Modern Memory* include Fussell's narrow canonical judgements, his assumption that only soldiers are the victims of war, and his consideration of war as a memoir which "inhibits thinking about war as a continuous and

on-going condition of twentieth-century life."<sup>26</sup> But, particularly interesting in her essay is the observation about gender: "What's so shocking when one casts an eye over the landscape of Fussell's book . . . is the utter absence of women. Women are nowhere to be seen. They are not at the front, they are not writing their memoirs."<sup>27</sup> Although Fussell briefly nods to Vera Britain's *Testament of Youth* and *Honourable Estate* and Virginia Woolf's *Jason's Room*, the gesture does little favor to women.<sup>28</sup>

My grievance and Hanley's goes beyond the fact that women just do not show up in Fussell's text. Hanley's concerns extend to how Fussell's text instills a readily consumable myth. This myth imagines war as always somewhere else, as "impinging on no one but soldiers,"<sup>29</sup> and as "an aberration rather than a habit of culture."<sup>30</sup> Beyond this, my concern is how the readily consumable nature of this myth, which erases the presence of *any* women, egregiously replicates itself in the context of male-dominated military institutions. Fussell's text, and others like it, certainly foster a series of gendered assumptions that erode and ultimately erase women's presence in combat. More significant, however, is that when these assumptions reside within the military classroom, the gender pointer itself--the index for any consideration about women--is eliminated. The issue is not that the only war literature referent is masculine, but that there is no possibility for it to be otherwise. In other words, when hyper-masculine military institutions absorb texts such as Fussell's, positive discursive representations of military women recede. Initially, military women are academy classmates, officer candidates. As represented in the academies' canonical texts, they then become women on the periphery of war and, eventually, women absent from war altogether. Finally, the norm becomes having no awareness that women can or should be represented in a military environment-

-no thought, no question by men or women about why women have been shut out of war stories completely.

In Donald Anderson's *Aftermath*, an anthology of post-Vietnam fiction, women are at least present, but only as observers looking in on the world of war from which they remain essentially shut out. Of the fourteen authors, only three women contribute to Anderson's collection: Lynne Hanley, Maxine Kumin, and Stephanie Vaughn. With the exception of Hanley's, the other stories describe women displaced by war's effect on the men they know and love. Maxine Kumin's "The Missing Person" is about a mother, Ellie, who comes to terms with her MIA son's death only when she has to report her husband, Alan, missing. Husband and wife of twenty-eight years, Ellie "loses" Alan during a trip to an unfamiliar city where they had planned to see their daughter-in-law perform in a play. Losing her son and later her husband certainly warrant empathy, but what stands out in this short story goes beyond the intense grief. Indirectly, war proves emotionally debilitating only to women who, being shut out from the war, are already stereotypically weak. When Ellie reminisces over a photo of her and her son, Jay, we learn: "They were both ashamed of their fears, mother and son, sharing an aversion to Ferris wheels, observation towers, and diving boards."<sup>31</sup> Underlying this mother's grief are imbedded irrational fears which, because she shares them with her child, validate the mother and son bond as well as the all too familiar rhetorical pairing of "womenandchildren." After Jay's disappearance in a helicopter it is Ellie, not her husband Alan, who "is reclusive," "grows things," and whose "mind skips and bumbles."<sup>32</sup> Overwhelmed, Ellie retreats to the domesticity of gardening—an image entirely inconsistent with war. By the time a police sergeant asks her if there is "any

history of mental disorder," it is ambiguous as to whether he is inquiring about Alan or Ellie.<sup>33</sup> Ellie "survived her ordeal" because she "conquered the subway" and "forced the city to declare Alan a missing person twelve hours ahead of schedule."<sup>34</sup> The suggestion is that women can hold up under traumatic circumstance as long as they are not expected to assertively raise grievances or conquer anything but subways.

Stephanie Vaughn's "Kid MacArthur" and Lynne Hanley's "War Torn" repeat the pattern of women who are not just distanced from, but, rather, are entirely displaced by war. Vaughn's story is largely about a sister's postwar adjustment to her brother's Vietnam service. The sister, as the first person narrator, describes her awareness of war's gendered exclusion yet still frames womanhood as a privilege: "[W]hen I contemplate my wasted youth and corrupted womanhood, I recall that when I left high school I went to college. When MacArthur left high school, he went to war."<sup>35</sup> This is not survivor's remorse, but an acknowledgement of sexual difference as an inherent, natural protector. Surprisingly, it is the narrator's father who suspends gendered stereotypical thinking when he tells her, "You can learn to load shells, too, you know."<sup>36</sup> Her reply, "No, thanks . . . [m]y destiny is with the baton," accentuates the phallic difference without directly acknowledging it. In other words, the sister is not averse to learning how to load shells because she abhors war or danger, but because her "destiny" calls her to practice being a majorette—once again, not only mocking women's connection to war, but even their discussions of it. The term "majorette" is also quite a telling pun on female officers who hold the military rank of Major. Are these women, as the term (Major-ette) suggests, equally diminished by war's experiences because they do not have access to them?

Similarly, Hanley's story keeps women outside of war's experience, despite the physicality of one female character who lives within the war zone. Hanley compares the experiences of two noncombatant women: an American named Elizabeth, and a woman trying to evacuate from Tan Son Nhut (the U.S. air base in Saigon). I applaud Hanley's staging of women in a masculinized environment without simultaneously responding to a men killed in war; however, her piece, as well as the other stories, still represents women objectified and diminished by war's circumstance.

The uncomfortable position of women's historical existence in a "less than man" status is best captured by *Aftermath's* book jacket. With its black foreground and small horizontal white lettering (the contributing authors' names), the jacket cleverly mirrors the Vietnam Memorial. At the center of the jacket is a small box framing a picture of an Army Captain hugging a woman. Visible is the Captain's smiling face but only the woman's back. Crushed between them is a flower, presumably a welcome-home flower. Against the blackness of a wall honoring soldiers who lost their lives is the face of this soldier who survived. In this photo, other family members do not appear—just this woman. Although she can be any woman, any wife, it is what her presence suggests that ultimately makes this man a hero. She facilitates the American myth of masculine protection in a way that another photo—such as this officer's first steps back on American soil--would not. Military and, in this case, civilian women have no agency commensurate with a male soldier's; their value derives only from the masculine experience of war, which is a perspective that many young officer candidates have the potential to adopt. When it comes to women, texts such as *Aftermath* put a unique spin on the "show and tell" experience of war by showing women and telling nothing

(positive) about them.

Thus far, I have argued that certain literary texts taught in the classrooms of military academies represent limited constructions of women and the military. Moving from Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*, illustrative of texts negating *all* women, toward Anderson's *Aftermath*, illustrative of women without agency, I now offer, via the writing of Tim O'Brien, a third representation of women's discursive presence.

O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato* (1978) followed by *The Things They Carried* (1990) secured his place in the canon of war literature. Of these works, *The Things They Carried* is more regularly taught at the military academies. The Air Force Academy includes it as part of Junior/Senior English, the Naval Academy as part of Freshmen Composition, and West Point in its course "The Arts of War." Tim O'Brien also frequently guest lectures at these military schools. Of particular interest on West Point's syllabus is the classroom instruction for March 3<sup>rd</sup>, "Before Class: Read *The Things They Carried*. 93-116. In Class: Discuss O'Brien's alleged sexism." No other discussion topic uses the word "alleged." Instead, other debatable topics are framed in a manner that allows for differing points of view by virtue of the parenthetical. For example, the entry on February 25<sup>th</sup> instructs the students to discuss, "How was (not) the Vietnam War unique?" as well as another instruction item for February 27<sup>th</sup>, "What do they [Caputo and O'Brien] (dis)agree on about telling war stories?" When "alleged" is used in conjunction with highly sensitive topics such as sexism and sexual harassment in a predominantly male military institution, its meaning moves from "unproven" to "readily discountable." In actuality, Tim O'Brien's hero-like status among the services is beyond any alleged challenge to his alleged sexist views.

Lorrie N. Smith's compelling article, "'The Things Men Do': The Gendered Subtext in Tim O'Brien's *Esquire* Stories," faults O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* because "the text offers no challenge to a discourse of war which apparently innocent American men are tragically wounded and women are objectified, excluded, and silenced."<sup>37</sup> More specifically, she claims that O'Brien

inscribes no critique of his characters' misogyny or the artificial binary opposition of masculinity and femininity, no redefinition of power, no fissure in the patriarchal discourse of war. However ambiguous and horrible Vietnam may be war is still presented as an inevitable, natural phenomenon deeply meaningful to the male psyche and hostile to femininity. More pernicious, these stories seem to warn women readers away from any empathetic grasp of "the things men do."<sup>38</sup>

The women characters in O'Brien's story aptly fit the two discursive constructions I discussed earlier—absent and mute. Surprisingly, even in their absence women can do men wrong. Soldiers in O'Brien's stories are either not appreciated by the women back home, who also cannot begin to fathom war, or these soldiers become injured/dead if they think about them. Such damning connections to women are not new to war literature. Norman Mailer, for example, also connects his soldiers' misfortune to women in *Naked and the Dead*, although in his text, characters communicate the negative attitudes they harbor against women in far more sexualized terms. Essentially, this ubiquitous trope blames women; it is the woman's fault for putting men in the position of having to protect her. So, demonizing the woman serves to maintain male innocence, which, as Smith points out, is "the ur-story underlying all war stories: the tragic destruction of male



innocence.”<sup>39</sup> Innocence, a stereotypically feminine trait, is reimagined in the war scenario as masculine. Innocent men are not necessarily cowards, the identity prefigured for innocent women.

However, O’Brien’s “Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong,” a selection in *The Things They Carried*, distorts women’s stereotypical innocence by transforming Mary Anne Belle from culottes-princess to savage-warrior. Mary Anne joins her boyfriend, Mark Fossie, in Vietnam. She arrives there as a seventeen-year-old “tall, big-boned blonde” with “long white legs and blue eyes and a complexion like strawberry ice cream . . . . [v]ery friendly, too.”<sup>40</sup> By the end of the second week, Mark’s initial feelings of pride and amazement at how well his Barbie-doll girlfriend adapts to the war-torn environment quickly subside. Mary Anne falls “into the habits of the bush . . . . [n]o cosmetics, no fingernail filing . . . she stop[s] wearing jewelry, cut[s] her hair short and wrap[s] it in a dark green bandana.”<sup>41</sup> After she teams up with the Green Berets, Mary Anne’s appearance is so hyper-masculinized that she is no longer described in terms of feminine difference: “She wore a bush hat and filthy green fatigues; she carried the standard M-16 automatic assault rifle; her face was black with charcoal.”<sup>42</sup> Mary Anne’s transformation, which is physical as well as emotional, reverses both hers and Mark’s relationship expectations. All discussions concerning marriage, home, and kids have “a new imprecision” in the way they are discussed.”<sup>43</sup> Mary Anne wants to stay in Vietnam and, in the end, she does stay because “she had crossed to the other side. She was part of the land.”<sup>44</sup>

Among the strongest of Lorrie Smith’s observations concerning this story, which she claims, “can be read as a gendered and perhaps parodic version of *Heart of Darkness* and

its derivative retelling, *Apocalypse Now*,” is her analysis of Mary Anne’s necklace of tongues.<sup>45</sup> The tongues, which “carry a multiplicitous sexual charge, suggesting both male and female genitalia, hetero- and homoerotic sexuality,” also symbolically acknowledge Mary Anne’s acceptance into the male-coded language of war.<sup>46</sup> This would seem to be a positive step forward for women who have previously been shut out by war. However, despite O’Brien’s bold move to portray a highly competent woman in such an untraditionally fearsome role, Smith’s criticism remains unaltered. First, Smith claims that Mary Anne “is given no motive for her change and [therefore] exists to register the men’s reactions to her.”<sup>47</sup> Mary Anne has no agency, but for that which men do not understand about her. It is true that in the majority of the original story and its retelling by both Rat Kiley and the narrator, Mary Anne is the subject of discussion by the troops. The men see her as Fossie’s girlfriend, a medic, a volleyball player, and even as a Green Beret. But isn’t this reasonable? Because she is the person of difference, it is far more interesting to have the men’s multiple perceptions of her rather than her homogeneous perception of “the men.” And, although her involvement in Vietnam reaches extremes, Mary Anne does explain her motivation: “ ‘I’m here,’ she’d say, ‘I might as well learn something.’ ”<sup>48</sup>

Secondly, because Mary Anne disappears into the woods, Smith claims that the character has no overall effect: “Mary Anne is never elevated to the level of tragic heroine, but remains a sort of macabre, B-movie ‘joke,’ good for a nervous laugh among the men. Ultimately, her change changes nothing.”<sup>49</sup> I disagree. It is true that Mary Anne does not join the Special Forces, but instead, melds into the war-torn Vietnamese jungle as a kind of animal. However, because this narrative frames itself as a story’s re-

telling, Mary Anne establishes a foothold on war's narrative legacy in a way that other women have not. Hers is not a character absent, shut out, or diminished. O'Brien deserves more credit for depicting a woman in war who is not a grieving mother or a displaced sister, but rather, an independent woman who is "intrigued" by war and possesses "a good quick mind."<sup>50</sup>

Where O'Brien falls short in support of women is not in having Mary Anne disappear, but in having her disappear while she is still wearing her culottes and her pink sweater. During her first ambush with the Green Berets, Mary Anne wears "a bush hat and filthy green fatigues."<sup>51</sup> Even if she has to disappear in woman's clothes to maintain a connection with her original character, why isn't she wearing her "cut-off blue jeans"<sup>52</sup> or her "white blouse and a navy blue skirt"<sup>53</sup>? Possibly O'Brien's interests lie in the contrast between her culottes and pink sweater and her necklace of human tongues, which she is also wearing and which positions her between stereotypically gendered extremes. However, in support of military women, a more powerful version would be a Mary Anne who disappears into the rainforest shedding an outfit which overtly parades and mocks feminine innocence and lack of know-how as immutable traits, wholly incompatible with war. O'Brien includes the necklace of tongues, as horrifying as it is, in contrast to Mary Anne's pink sweater and culottes in order to reinscribe the feminine. On Mary Anne the necklace is jewelry while on a male soldier's body those tongues would represent emblems of victory. The credit O'Brien is due for writing a powerful woman in "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong" is undercut at the very end of the story when he does not allow Mary Anne's visual transformation to hold.

I have been discussing how particular texts commonly taught at military academies

inhibit women's discursive development as leaders. The gender bias made possible by this military canon does not reside with the texts alone. Surrounding these texts is a military culture steeped in value and tradition, which complements this canon, but continues to hinder women's progress. We can consider, as Cynthia Enloe does, military academies and other training institutions as "conduit[s] for explicit and implicit 'lessons' about how to ensure bonding and morale, how to enforce discipline, how to cultivate leadership, how to optimize human resources in different sorts of warfare."<sup>54</sup> Although she is not referring to an academic texts, Enloe's claim, that "all of these training preoccupations—bonding, morale, leadership, discipline, human resources management are profoundly gendered, even if there is not a single woman in the platoon," holds true.<sup>55</sup> There is no need to mask a canon that is decidedly gendered because the environment (what is valued) predisposes such bias as normal. The discussion that follows examines the more implicit connection between texts and values, how the military's values influence classroom instruction, and how those values gender-color the teaching methods of the instructors themselves.

In many ways leadership instruction concentrates less on acquiring knowledge and more on living military values. For example, in a message just released by the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), which outlines the course of general military training for the year 2000, the CNO calls for a curriculum "designed to boost the readiness of all sailors to win in combat, at sea, ashore, and in life." The standardized training topics fall under one of four curricular areas: Navy heritage, personal growth and professional relationships, managing risk, and wellness. As the message states, "All topics are *value* based, emphasizing commitment to doing the right thing"[my emphasis]. Now, consider

how values discursively reside in the military courses. More specifically, what texts foster values compatible with the military's professional and behavioral norms? Leading the CNO's list of required courses is "Upholding core values, heroes and their stories," stories which undoubtedly reinforce the inextricable link between textual content and military values. Periodically interjecting a pro-woman's text or giving empty speeches about how the military values women's contributions does nothing to sever this link. A textual history saturated in Americana's values predisposes military officers, who are to live these same values, to accept what they read. Unfortunately, such acceptance tolerates a canon of war literature that does not value women in the military. Given, then, the close connection between text and value, let me offer the following Air Force pamphlet as illustrative of how leadership values themselves are gendered.

In 1982 the Department of English at the United States Air Force Academy published *Literature in the Education of the Military Professional*. The pamphlet's collection of nine essays argues for the importance of officer candidates to study the humanities. However, these essays reveal more than an interest in a well-rounded, learned officer. The authors of these essays construct a canonical paradox that continues to disrupt the full acceptance of women in the military. On one hand, the contributors outline the qualities crucial to leadership such as "imagination," "determination," "loyalty," "esteem," "dedication," and "empathy" (just to name a few). Extending this list of leadership's unisex emotions are others such as pre-pubescent innocence and fear (so aptly characterized by, among others, Henry Fleming in *The Red Badge of Courage*). These qualities are, by no means, gender specific. All of them are well within even the most limited definition of femininity; yet, they do not, as a result, increase opportunities

for women as fighter pilots and/or women as generals. The layering of other “male” narratives, typically those of leaders, warriors, and protectors, recasts these leadership qualities as accessible only to men, especially within the soldier-scholar environment of a military academy. Penetrating these narrative layers is a discursive rite of passage where boys become men and military leaders. Most military women do not. In other words, not only are the majority of texts from which cadets learn these leadership qualities markedly absent of women, but texts (already on the ‘accepted’ list) that could afford some opportunities to see women as leaders are muted by this layering of male narratives.

Let me offer two examples of this rhetorical technique that define an otherwise genderless notion of leadership as a male one. First, Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale, United States Navy (Retired), provides the foreword for the pamphlet mentioned above. It is not only his first two names, “James Bond,” that ironically subvert the place of women to begin with, but his credentials, “fighter pilot, carrier air wing commander, war hero, prisoner of war, and prominent naval administrator.”<sup>56</sup> These credentials (with the possible exception of the last) are simply not attainable by women who are barred from serving in combat. Yet, this very male hero-narrative authorizes and sanctions a collection of essays designed to equate specific leadership characteristics with literature. The existence of Stockdale’s discursive frame to discuss the humanities, and not something more in sync with his experience (i.e. POW issues), suggests that leadership qualities are indeed modeled after the fighter pilot, carrier wing commander, war hero, and prisoner of war and are, therefore, only attainable by men.

Second, a number of the pamphlet’s contributing professors believes the *Odyssey* to be a crucial text for learning leadership skills. One professor claims that the *Odyssey* is a

way to see how “reading and weaving” [what Penelope does] versus “being a soldier and engaging in war [what Odysseus does] are not really polar pursuits.”<sup>57</sup> But a woman sewing is hardly a comparable leadership metaphor for a man fighting on a battlefield. Yet, this metaphor is indicative of an institutional ideology that purports ‘leadership for all’ at the expense of eliminating or belittling the existence of women. In an effort to acknowledge women’s contributions, why must they also be oriented, and falsely inflated, in comparison to a man’s? Literary metaphors readily elide themselves with historical circumstance, but relying on this practice when addressing gender shuts down women’s opportunities in traditionally male environments. The way to address women’s presence is not to elevate and equate their domesticity with battlefield heroism. Betsy Ross significantly contributed to this nation’s history; however, all the sewing in world made her neither soldier nor President.

### **Conclusion**

The military canon perpetuates only one acceptable model of leadership—masculine. My intent in this chapter has been to examine the discursive development of officers from the perspective of how canons *form*, not how canons are formed. Specifically, the ways that women are discursively absent, shut out, or diminished within military culture can change only if the textual foundations change first. Gendered biases are particularly difficult to eradicate from a military that both espouses equality and maintains a discourse of hyper-masculinity that underlies successful leaders. The solution is not to applaud a woman’s domestic contribution as equal, say, to a man who risks his life in war, but, rather, to make room for a discourse that envisions women’s leadership potential as actually attainable and necessary.

John Fiske suggests, "There is some evidence that finding a discourse in a text that makes sense of one's experience of social powerlessness in a positive way is the vital first step toward being able to do something to change that powerlessness."<sup>58</sup> I believe I have found the powerlessness of such discourse for military women—this chapter is one "powerful" step to change it.



## Notes to Chapter I

<sup>1</sup> Alleen Pace Nilsen, "Women in Children's Literature," *College English* 32 (1971): 918.

<sup>2</sup> Nilsen 923.

<sup>3</sup> Carol Barkalow, *In the Men's House* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott, *Gendering War Talk* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993) 317.

<sup>5</sup> Elaine Showalter, "Women and the Literary Curriculum," *College English* 32 (1971): 855-862.

<sup>6</sup> This Appendix lists the suggested reading only for Air Force officers. However, a complete list of the suggested reading for Air Force officers, enlisted, and civilian personnel can be found on the internet at: <http://www.af.mil/lib/csafbook/csafoff.html>

<sup>7</sup> George L. Dillion, *Contending Rhetorics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 39.

<sup>8</sup> The Honorable Sheila E. Widnall, "From WAFs to Warrior: A Reflection of Women in the United States Air Force," Remarks prepared for delivery to national Archives Conference on U.S. Military Women in World War II College Park, Maryland, 3 March 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Due to its limited size, I have chosen not to include the Coast Guard Academy.

<sup>10</sup> John Guillory, *Cultural Capital* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993) 19-25.

<sup>11</sup> Guillory 15.

<sup>12</sup> Guillory 17.

<sup>13</sup> Guillory 17.

<sup>14</sup> Guillory 17.

<sup>15</sup> Guillory 20.

<sup>16</sup> Jane Tompkins, who valorizes the writings of early women in spite of the historical realities that limited their writing to topics of domesticity, writes in response to Ann Douglass' *The Feminization of American Culture* in what is more commonly referred to as the Douglass-Tompkins debate.

<sup>17</sup> Guillory 17.

<sup>18</sup> Guillory 28.

<sup>19</sup> Guillory 28.

<sup>20</sup> Guillory 28.

<sup>21</sup> Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988) 51. [Qtd in Guillory 19]

<sup>22</sup> Peter Osborne, "Radicalism without Limit? Discourse, Democracy, and the Politics of Identity," *Socialism and the Limits of Liberalism*, ed. Peter Osborne (New York: Verso, 1991) 216-217. [Qtd in Guillroy 12]

<sup>23</sup> Rush Limbaugh interjected the derogatory phrase "femme-Nazi" into popular culture. Within military culture, I have also heard his phrase extended to "Nazi-femme-bitches."

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* (New York: W W Norton & Company, 1976) 82.

<sup>25</sup> Lynne Hanley, "Thinking Bayonets," *Massachusetts Review* 3 (1989): 447.

<sup>26</sup> Hanley 448.

<sup>27</sup> Hanley 446.

<sup>28</sup> Hanley 446.

<sup>29</sup> Hanley 446.

<sup>30</sup> Hanley 448.

<sup>31</sup> Maxine Kumin, "The Missing Person," *Afermath*, ed. Donald Anderson (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995) 105.

<sup>32</sup> Kumin 106.

<sup>33</sup> Kumin 108.

<sup>34</sup> Kumin 114.

<sup>35</sup> Stephanie Vaughn, "Kid MacArthur," *Afermath*, ed. Donald Anderson (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995) 170.

<sup>36</sup> Vaughn 170.

<sup>37</sup> Lorrie N. Smith, "'The Things Men Do': The Gendered Subtext in Tim O'Brien's *Esquire* Stories," *Critique* 36 (1994): 17.

<sup>38</sup> Smith 38.

<sup>39</sup> Smith 27.

<sup>40</sup> Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990) 105.

<sup>41</sup> O'Brien 109.

<sup>42</sup> O'Brien 113.

<sup>43</sup> O'Brien 110.

<sup>44</sup> O'Brien 125.

<sup>45</sup> Smith 32.

<sup>46</sup> Smith 35.

<sup>47</sup> Smith 36.

<sup>48</sup> O'Brien 107.

<sup>49</sup> Smith 36.

<sup>50</sup> O'Brien 107.

<sup>51</sup> O'Brien 113.

<sup>52</sup> O'Brien 106.

<sup>53</sup> O'Brien 113.

<sup>54</sup> Cynthia H. Enloe, "The Politics of Constructing the American Woman Soldier," *Women Soldiers Images and Realities*, eds. Elisabetta Addis, Valeria E. Russo, and Lorenza Sebesta (New York: St Martin's Press, 1994) 83-4.

<sup>55</sup> Enloe 83-4.

<sup>56</sup> Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale, Foreword, *Literature in the Education of the Military Professional* (Colorado, United States Air Force Academy Department of English, 1982) x.

<sup>57</sup> William McCarron, Literature and Combat, *Literature in the Education of the Military Professional* (Colorado, United States Air Force Academy Department of English, 1982)

71.

<sup>58</sup> John Fiske, "Television Culture," *Literary Theory: An Anthology* eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1988) 1097.

## Chapter II:

### **Pop Goes the Unofficial Canon: Disrupting the Military's Biographical "Norm"**

A poster board slightly canted to one side hangs in the lobby of the McChord Air Force Base dental clinic (Tacoma, Washington). Affixed to it are various pictures of pioneering military women such as Sally Ride, the first woman astronaut. But, it is possible to miss the display because of the large screen television that is directly to the viewer's left. Although many service members frequent the facility, CNN's *Headline News* and the waiting area's table magazines, not the poster, capture patients' interests. The military women's tribute is clearly displaced. And if it were not for the fact that the women are wearing flight suits, their pictures could be mistaken for either the clinic's employee(s)-of-the-month or dental flossing queens. The important question is why are these pictures displayed here? Events and people worthy of military tribute are more characteristically hailed in the foyers of command buildings such as those occupied by Wing Commanders. Although the display intends to praise these women's accomplishments, instead it undercuts its intentions by housing them in the clinic rather than the commander's foyer. Such an unusual setting fashions the contributions of these pioneering women as both visible and empty. If military women are ever to disrupt the stories that construct military identity as male, then their accomplishments deserve the same attention as men's. To celebrate women's accomplishments is not to relegate them to dental clinics.

From the opposite point of view, visible and empty images of military women's contributions can also be *invisible* but rhetorically present. Regan Cornum, daughter of Army medical doctor Major Rhonda Cornum, provides one rather humorous example of

this inversion. Before Regan's mother ever earned her fame as America's first woman POW, she was also a traditional parent who did her share of carpool duty. During a carpool ride, Regan casually asked a school friend, "What kind of doctor is your mother?"<sup>1</sup> In asking this question, Regan renders her mother invisible because she assumes that all mothers are doctors rather than seeing her mother as an accomplished individual. If, as Regan assumes, all moms are doctors, Rhonda Cornum would be indistinguishable from all mothers and, therefore, invisible in her accomplishments. As it is, Rhonda Cornum's accomplishments surface only because of her daughter's question; Regan rhetorically creates her mother's presence even as her question minimizes Cornum's successes.

So far I have described two vignettes at opposite poles that represent military women as visible/invisible and empty/present. I have done so because the narratives I discuss in this chapter negotiate the space between these vignettes. Such narratives go beyond my interest in the previous chapter where I discussed how military texts inscribe inherently masculine behavioral norms and expectations in the formation of military officers. In this chapter I move to those narratives *disruptive* of normative masculinity.

As I explained in Chapter One, senior military leadership has carved out an official canon (a prescribed knowledge base) which reinforces the military's distinctly masculine norms. These norms are inculcated during the course of an officer's professional development, forming one image: military officers should be white, male, Christian, and heterosexual. However, within more contemporary texts there exists a secondary, unofficial canon that challenges this normative image. Texts outside of the military's traditional literary canon disrupt the prefabricated military self because they acknowledge

inconsistencies with military life, values, and profession that stem from the presence of women and homosexuals in the armed services.

For the purposes of this chapter, I have narrowed the range of unofficial texts to military auto/biography. And, as the following anecdote reveals, I also believe this narrative form has the greatest capacity for disruption within military culture. When ex-Air Force Lieutenant Kelly Flinn appeared during her Colorado Springs book promotional, the Air Force Academy leadership prohibited cadets from attending.<sup>2</sup> Such prohibition came from an institution that tolerates other non-conforming agendas as in regularly teaching *Catch-22* and hosting Tim O'Brien as a speaker. Why this double standard? The answer is clear. While Heller and O'Brien criticize the military's behavioral norms, ultimately, they leave those norms intact. Kelly Flinn's attack, on the other hand, is not friendly fire.

For this chapter I have selected the life stories of military members who have upset the norms of *the* military story with their unfriendly-fire: Kelly Flinn (*Proud to Be*), Kara Hultgreen (*Call Sign Revlon*), Maragarethe Cammermeyer (*Serving in Silence*), James Kennedy (*About Face*), and Rhonda Cornum (*She Went to War*). Their textual images both embrace and reject norms of behavior sanctioned in other foundational, non-disruptive biographies such as H. Norman Schwarzkopf's *It Doesn't Take a Hero*. Schwarzkopf's rhetorical patterns define military "norms" for all service members and, in some cases, for all Americans. His image, representative of other successful military leaders, establishes a distinctively gendered template without appearing to do so, and hence I argue that the auto/biographical images of women and homosexuals are disruptive within military culture because they can never fully attain Schwarzkopf's

rhetorical level of *masculinity a la Americana*, a phrase I use to describe the notion that patriotic language is inherently masculine. Instead, as these auto/biographical narratives reveal, women and homosexuals can only mirror pieces of Schwarzkopf's image.

Women can appear male, gays can act straight, and, at times, both groups can speak *Americana*. However, women and homosexuals become disruptive because they cannot entirely mirror the image Schwarzkopf projects. They also become disruptive when as women and homosexuals, they give in to sexual stereotypes (that they paradoxically attempt to diminish and discount) as well as a military discourse that is perceived to be, but is not, gender-neutral. The distinction between these last two rather abstract disruptions will become clearer later in this chapter. The following brief discussion of auto/biography guides this clarity.

This chapter advocates an appreciation of auto/biography as a literary reflection of popular culture's gendered attitudes. Such reflections are particularly foundational to military culture which relies strongly on the exaltation of singular images (heroes) to disseminate *the* military story, and auto/biography is the premier narrative by which it does so. The wider cultural appeal of military biography is, quite simply, that traditional military biography consistently tells a hero's story for all times, all seasons. Americans want to read about national heroes and they want to believe in them. As a result, the auto/biography's cultural appeal is both a connection to the everyday person and an elevation of those superhuman traits and characteristics that shape each hero's success. These narratives endlessly repeat themselves independent of social and historical contexts because the ideals behind the heroic image, not the details of events, are paramount. Ultimately, stories of national heroes actually become the social and historical contexts;



national heroes serve as America's historical indices. Their legacy so grounds the society around them that their historical union forms a singular story. America tells this one heroic tale irrespective of where the battle is fought or which enemy is overcome as long as the hero represents the traditional military's biographical norm: male, heterosexual, and Christian. Military images that fall outside of this story disrupt military culture. The auto/biographies I refer to here, which have all been written between 1992 and 1998, clearly are not one-sided rhetorical events, but rather a selective series of narratives that reveal how gendered cultural expectations both reinforce and upset the norms touted by H. *Norm-man* Schwarzkopf.

### **The Norm**

What is most striking about Schwarzkopf's autobiography is that, as his book cover shows, it isn't striking at all. Only half of his face appears as a close-up on the cover, which instead draws attention to the salute he is rendering. The de-centering of his image suggests that he could be not only any man, but that he could be any red-blooded, God-fearing, mom-and-apple-pie-supporting American man. Schwarzkopf's text repeats all of this discursively, invoking all the archetypes Americans have come to expect from their heroes. He rises from a humble upbringing, one complicated by a strained relationship to his alcoholic mother. His father, also an Army general, is the perfect model for his namesake. In fact, Norman follows in his father's footsteps by enrolling in Bordentown Military Academy, a boarding school, at the age of 12.<sup>3</sup> Although all of the auto/biographies I have selected suggest connections between childhood traits and a destined military career, Schwarzkopf's alone is reinforced by the pre-existing military success of his father: military professionalism is in his blood.<sup>4</sup> He possesses a strong

faith. He marries (stays married), has three children, and owns a dog. In short, Norman Schwarzkopf is exactly what Americans expect from their military heroes.

The language that holds these archetypes together, particularly for military figures, is essential to a hero's presence. In other words, the shaping of a leader's image is not just about meeting the prerequisite norms; it is also about voicing these archetypes in a manner that addresses national expectations. Schwarzkopf meets the criteria for the military role, but does he also possess the rhetorical presence to play it? Certainly, the suggestion that his leadership is destined secures a certain confidence level in his abilities. Few military personnel would ever challenge sanctioned traditions, particularly the wisdom borne from West Point's "long gray line."<sup>5</sup> However, the essence of leadership demands that its formula for success match its art. In the following speech Schwarzkopf relies on art to set the tone for the Gulf War:

Let me leave you with one thought, guys. In order for this to succeed . . . it is going to take . . . killer instinct on the part of all our leaders out there. . . . there's going to be none of this bullshit, "Well, I think we're going to go in and probe a little bit and see if we can get through." We need commanders in the lead who absolutely, clearly understand that they *will get through*. And that once they get through they're not going to stop and discuss it. . . . I cannot afford to have commanders who do not understand that it is attack, attack, attack, attack, and destroy every step of the way.<sup>6</sup>

Schwarzkopf's tone eases when he reminds his commanders that "the prestige of the entire United States of America rests on *our* shoulders" and "for our country we dare not fail. We cannot fail, and we will not fail" [my emphasis].<sup>7</sup> The art within military

culture simultaneously portrays commanders, particularly Schwarzkopf, as one of the troops (accessible, understanding, connected to subordinates) and as a perfect, decisive, morally-pure leader—qualities that average, even above average, Americans do not possess. Based on this grafting of art onto prerequisite leadership criteria, military women and homosexuals find such constructed qualities even more difficult to embrace.

Popular and military cultures subscribe to the same leadership expectations because heroic rhetoric has national appeal. Yet, it is the military that bears the burden of proof—to establish paths of service which optimize leadership potential. For service men and women, the resulting success stories are both a belief system and a work ethic, a patriotic lore they recite daily. Mottoes, primary forms of patriotic lore, provide concentrated reminders of the profession's standards of conduct and behavior.

The motto for all military services, which originated at the Air Force Academy, is "Integrity first, service before self, excellence in all we do." It captures the lives of the military's finest by sounding wholesome, good, worthy of America's ideals. I am interested in how this phrase, which is an example of institutionalized patriotism, eases and inhibits the presence of women and homosexuals in the military. On one hand, such patriotic discourse enhances and, I believe, ensures the stature of military heroes such as Norman Schwarzkopf. Military leaders are in the business of performative speaking when they remind the nation, as politicians would remind their constituents, that they serve America's best interest and that they will complete the mission with maximum effort at minimal cost. Because "America's finest" are "defending the peace" and "laying their lives on the line" for "one nation under God," "We the People" can sleep better at night. These are the all too familiar sound bytes of *Americana* that benefit the male,

heterosexual, and Christian soldiers who serve in the military. Conversely, concentrated patriotic discourse does not bolster careers or enhance images of women and homosexuals, even if they sound as patriotic as their straight, male counterparts. If, as I believe, Schwarzkopf's level of patriotism is posited as straight masculinity, then women and homosexuals remain removed from the qualities integral to hero status, if not, basic military success. Women and homosexuals cannot appropriate this discourse in its entirety because they are at odds with *the* military image, and therefore, they remain outside of the pre-fabricated all-American military narrative. Schwarzkopf claims in his title that *It Doesn't Take a Hero*,<sup>8</sup> but as I will discuss throughout this chapter, it does take a straight man.

Within the military's motto, I return now to the second commandment, "Service before self," to discuss the exclusion those outside of the norm experience when gender cannot appropriate the discourse of the pre-fabricated all-American narrative. Also crucial to my discussion at this point is a rudimentary understanding of military sacrifice. Unlike the other qualities in the military's motto, integrity and excellence, it is the selfless nature of military service, the notion of sacrifice, which separates military from civilian culture. Service members must be willing to give their lives to defend freedom. It is this philosophy which bears any and all professional burdens, absorbs discontent and disruption, and acknowledges to the public that war first risks the loss of military lives and then civilian ones. But these military lives are first and foremost thought of as male, which is, I believe, a gendered inversion to the larger notion of sacrifice. Society at large feminizes the terms "sacrifice" and "selflessness" in images of self-sacrificing mothers and wives who subjugate their own interests for those of their children and husbands.

The military inverts this gendered connotation and absorbs it into its behavioral norms. Positing the feminized notion of "sacrifice" as one that can only be donned positively in the military by straight males has subsequent implications in the fashioning of individuals' careers.

The mindset of the military collective demands sacrifice not only to achieve war's objectives, but also adherence to selfless attitudes in the everyday lives of its members. Consequently, planning for individual career interests in the military is not compatible with the military's self-sacrificing nature. Unstated is the notion that the military knows how each individual best supports the mission. Military members do voice their assignment preferences, but the final decision for job position and locale is not one's own. As long as there is an assignment system that routinely attributes personnel placement to the "needs of the Air Force," service members who voice self-interest, essentially acting outside of the military's cruise-control, do so with prejudice. Patriotic dictums, such as "service before self," not only reflect the military's tenant of sacrifice, but they also have the added benefit of masking career self-interest. If, as I argue, sacrifice in the military is inherently male, then whether the sacrifice is on the battlefield or within the scope of career self-interest, women fall short. Career paths represent a series of gendered expectations secured by "service before self" mottoes; yet, the only self really served is a (straight) man's.

Almost as if the success achieved in his career has been accidental, Schwarzkopf never displays any professional self-interest. He understands the sacrifices made by the Gulf War's soldiers and, as his autobiography reflects, he is ever mindful of them. Schwarzkopf suggests that doing what *he* loves to do, command, better serves his soldiers

and his country, not himself. This rhetorical staging misrepresents what is too 'good' to be true. Although it is the tenor of the story he tells, Schwarzkopf did not become a four-star general because he relinquished his professional desires to the greater military good. He did it by adopting a feminized notion of sacrifice and, as with others in military culture, using it to conform to the military masculinized norms and to enhance his career. Yet, when military women attempt to occupy the same sacrificial space, their language becomes disruptive to military culture. Disruptive is the suggestion that military women would seek career paths that call for sacrifices beyond the traditional (permissible) range: children and husbands. Not surprisingly, then, although many women and gays speak with the same sacrificial tenor as Schwarzkopf when describing their service, they are discursively predisposed *not* to reach the same level of patriotic sentimentality. Women and (closeted) gays have to be more vigilant in recognizing and searching out career opportunities because, unlike Schwarzkopf, they cannot adopt the rhetoric of a selfness nature and hope to reach four-star status.

As with the other rhetorical devices that ground military norms as male, central to institutionalized patriotic discourse is the idea that men protect the feminized family. As a child, Schwarzkopf describes his new familial role when his father goes off to war in August 1942: "Because he was leaving, [my father] said, I was now going to have a big job. It was up to me to look after the girls, because men are the protectors of women."<sup>9</sup> Undoubtedly, many fathers in 1942 left the same instructions with their sons. Certainly the gendered lines of power within the family were different then, primarily because it was a different world for women in 1942, one lacking in recognition and job opportunities. However, I believe what is not time specific is *how* this story establishes

gendered superiority at the expense of women's autonomy and freeze frames this image as foundational to "decent family values." In other words, of all the events in Schwarzkopf's life, *page one* of his autobiography defines the moment of his manhood as a woman's protector. To seal the inherited responsibility with which young Norman is charged, he receives his father's West Point graduation saber. In beginning his story with this scene, Schwarzkopf imparts a philosophy evident throughout the remainder of his text that patriotism anchors itself in a patriarchal tradition and that it will always mean fighting for (protecting) a feminized family.

In addition to his father, Schwarzkopf draws on other military men to model behavior and rhetoric: He initially wants to model his autobiography after *the Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* and it is one of General William T. Sherman's quotes that Schwarzkopf pastes over his desk in the Gulf: "War is the remedy our enemies have chosen. And I say let us give them all they want."<sup>10</sup> For military women, Schwarzkopf's kind of familial lineage and historical idolization is markedly absent. Military men and women experience the women's iconic void and, as a result, substitute less than compelling images that discount professional talent and, instead, serve only to further sexualize military women. In Kara Hultgreen's case, her male co-workers construct a female legacy for her: "Petty Officer Schwarz stopped Kara in the hangar and told her, 'I finally figured it out. It has bothered me since the first time I laid eyes on you . . . Mrs. Peel---You look like Mrs. Peel from the *Avengers*!'" Whether it is Mrs. Peel or television's more contemporary amazon Xena Warrior Princess, the focus for powerful upon their heroes without considering their model's appearance.

Suggestive of the subordinate position women hold throughout Schwarzkopf's text is

how his book's index characterizes the word itself. In the index the term "Women" has next to it "*see under* Army; Iraq-Kuwait crisis and Gulf War; Saudi Arabia." The instructions ironically categorize the situation of women in the Gulf War *under* various forms of conflict. Metaphorically the idea of women folds into a masculinized terrain rather than existing as an entity of its own. The women in Schwarzkopf's life call this metaphor's subordination into reality.

Overall, the images of women in Schwarzkopf's narrative, his mother, sister, and wife, connect to negative times in his life or are stereotypical portrayals of subordination. In his preface, Schwarzkopf mentions the internal struggles he faced deciding whether or not to talk about his mother's alcoholism, but now, as a more emotionally aware man (and *retired* soldier), he can be in touch with this other sensitive side. Schwarzkopf claims that he learned "tolerance" from his mother as a result of a bus ride incident while coming home from his elementary school. He had offered his bus seat to a black woman and, as result, the other children on the bus "started snickering and whispering as though [he] had done something really dumb."<sup>11</sup> His mother instructed him never to look down on anybody and explained: "You have to understand that you're one of the luckiest people in the world. You were born white, you were born Protestant, and you were born American."<sup>12</sup> She should have also added, "You were born male." However incomplete I believe her lesson now appears, the fact that she teaches him tolerance and not the loftier ideal of "integrity" which Schwarzkopf learns from his father diminishes and marginalizes her presence. Toleration is the lesson women like his mother can teach because like sacrifice it exists as the cultural feminine and drives societal expectations, subordinate though they may be.



A more dramatic presentation of how Schwarzkopf subordinates the female image is his discussion of his wife, Brenda Holsinger. They married in 1968 when Schwarzkopf was 34 and Brenda, a flight attendant, was 27. During his marriage proposal, he reminds Brenda of the transfers, frequent moves, and the possibility of his going to war—all factors inherent to military life.<sup>13</sup> Schwarzkopf's mini-"lecture" is intended for Brenda to realize that "she was marrying into an institution."<sup>14</sup> Her engagement ring is a miniature of his West Point class ring set with a family diamond.<sup>15</sup> The smaller version of West Point that Brenda accepts via her wedding ring welcomes her into the military's male-dominated club. Symbolically, it ensures that she too can take part in a discourse that will forever keep her miniature just like the ring.

Although Brenda works as a flight attendant, Schwarzkopf chooses to highlight Brenda's most stereotypical duties as a wife and mother: she bakes cookies and read stories to children, and as with *all* new wives she, of course, hasn't learned her way around the kitchen. As he describes below, Schwarzkopf makes adjustments to his wife's stereotypically feminine behavior:

In our cramped little bathroom . . . Brenda put a fuzzy pink cover on the lid of the toilet. . . . The problem was that the lid now would not stay up, so I had to learn to do my thing propping up the lid with one knee. I also learned to eat a lot of something I hadn't eaten since I was a small boy: meatloaf. For all her sophisticated New York ways, Brenda had not learned to cook. We consumed a great deal of catsup.<sup>16</sup>

I assume that these comments are intended to be light-hearted and humorous. They are not. Together they sketch a demeaning image of a woman not only because they channel

her familial contributions into cooking, but also because her actions stand in such contrast to the seamless way Schwarzkopf navigates through his military life. As Schwarzkopf portrays it, the marital adjustments result solely from *her* actions; his behavior adjusts to her disruption. Yet, ultimately, Mrs. Schwarzkopf disrupts no gendered narrative. Instead, she reinforces male norms and assures her image as a subordinate one. One of the reasons military women will never be H. Norman Schwarzkopfs is because their womanhood ties them to images of cooking bad meatloaf and buying pink toilet seat covers.

The one woman in Schwarzkopf's life who is truly disruptive to the masculinized military narrative is his sister, Ruth. Because of her views against the United States' involvement in Vietnam, she doesn't speak to her brother for 15 years.<sup>17</sup> Her strongly held views conflict with any pre-fabricated military narratives. The situation that arose in the Gulf and Schwarzkopf's role in it finally broke the silence between them.

### **Disrupting the Norm**

The collection of auto/biographies I have selected here is unique because they highlight a series of personal and professional "firsts" within military culture. Maragarethe Cammermeyer was the highest-ranking Army Officer (Colonel) to challenge the military's anti-gay policy. Rhonda Cornum was the first woman officer taken as a prisoner during the Gulf War when her helicopter was shot down. Kelly Flinn, at twenty-six years old, was the U.S. Air Force's first woman to pilot a B-52 and Kara Hultgreen was the United States Navy's first fully qualified female fleet fighter pilot. I have also included James E. Kennedy's autobiography, *About-Face*, because of Kennedy's unique position as both an enforcer of norms as a military lawyer and disrupter of norms as a gay

man.

In varying degrees, the women all establish personal and professional strengths that should, but do not, shape an overall marked strength in their narratives. Instead, imbedded within each story are narratives of gender and race that erode their power. These women concede to the military's conforming rhetoric, a language that does not embrace their images, by portraying themselves as victims and discounting any notion of sexual difference. In this sense, these rebels without a cause are rarely seen as viable entities who belong *to* the military; rather, they become women who are simply *in* the military and who, because of their disruptive effect, need to be outside the military's heroic mainstream, if not, as in the case of gays, ousted completely. Although their narratives often sound as patriotic as Schwarzkopf's, the other gendered and racial stereotypes that they invoke disrupt the military's one "true" pre-fabricated image of a hero. Central to my discussion at this point is how women's language pre-figures them as disruptive images within military culture.

### **The Victim Disruption**

The stereotypical portrayal of women as victims arises from both historical fact and ill perceived fiction. Historically, women's suffrage defined the long overdue need for women's access to the same rights and privileges as men. The women's movement rose to fulfill this need by expanding women's rights within America's judicial system, the hope being that new cultural narratives supportive of women would evolve into legally sanctioned societal norms which would recognize women as equals. In the past two decades the sequel to women's suffrage has shown itself through public efforts to open career opportunities for military women. The women depicted here have benefited from

those efforts. As a feminist with a vested interest in the advancement of military women, I was disappointed, however, to discover that my imagined heroines describe their military service in a discourse riddled with victimization and naïveté. Certainly these images disrupt the military's pre-fabricated Schwarzkopfian norms, but they also distance military women from achieving similar professional successes. Rhonda Cornum initially appears to be an exception. She is the *least* disruptive to military norms because she succeeds professionally. Unlike the others who counter Schwarzkopf's model behavior, she involves herself in no wrongful or questionable act; on the contrary, Cornum returns from the Gulf War a hero, having survived as a POW. Yet, I introduce her because she succeeds as a positive image within military culture only by succumbing to the disingenuous rhetoric of institutionalized patriotism and by invoking a stereotypically female discourse of weakness. In other words, her success is so fraught with *masculinity a la Americana* that it too underscores the military's norm as masculine.

Military women are within the "norms" only if they can exist in a gendered space of neutrality. Either they accept the masculine norm and try to appropriate it through language, attitude, and appearance, or they deny any feminine difference. Their auto/biographies seek the norm of soldier; therefore, these service women are *not* different, *not* women, *not* mothers, *not* female, but "just" soldiers, as if being a soldier carries no inherent cultural weight as male. It does. Military women who successfully negotiate a gendered space of neutrality as a position of their choosing are still marginalized by male discourse. It is, after all, the heavily gendered nature of military discourse that pre-figures their desire to succeed on male terms.

It would be shortsighted to claim that this heavily gendered military discourse

affords the only possibility for disruption. Contemporary auto/biographies of military women and homosexuals are also their own sites of disruption. Erupting from the gap between masculinized military discourse and women's attempts to meet it are the voices of stereotypical women who are victims, naïve, and morally suspect. These lacking stereotypical images voice a rhetorical presence for women which coincides with military women's sexualized representations. In a sense, military women live with the effects, displaced non-representative images, without being aware that their own rhetorical patterns help create them.

Although they do not specifically address military auto/biography, Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck consider how women characterize themselves particular to auto/biographical form. Brodzki and Schenck acknowledge that female autobiographers always write as mediated selves either because they lack their own tradition, as I discussed earlier, or because women live in a male-dominated culture.<sup>18</sup> Lois Banner disagrees with this position. But in an otherwise interesting essay, the logic behind her argument is egregiously faulty. Banner claims that the high population of women in today's reading public and women's powerful autobiographical legacy blurs "older definitions of who stands at the 'margin' of culture and who at the 'center.'"<sup>19</sup> The definitions may indeed be old, but they are still applicable, especially to women in the military who have no autobiographical history. Banner fails to consider other possibilities for women's marginalization. In addition to being diminished by a male-dominated culture, women are internally marginalized, as I just proposed, by their own rhetorical weaknesses, particularly those that erupt within powerful women's narratives. When the women represent themselves as victims of the bureaucratic systems,

unfortunate childhood circumstance, or male influence, they marginalize their own narratives.

The following examples illustrate the ease with which these ex-military members assume their victim status. Kelly Flinn acknowledges her own vulnerability and her own desires: "It was probably the weakest point in my life. It was the first time I'd tried to *have* a life. It was the first time I'd ever lived anywhere for more than a year. I wanted friendships, relationships, a home. I wanted to fall in love."<sup>20</sup> Because her wants are not satisfied, she considers herself "a prime target for a predator."<sup>21</sup> In Flinn's case the predator is Marc Zigo, a married man with whom she has an affair. However, her fictitious creation of the military as the demonized "other" also lends itself to the "predator" label. As a result, Flinn's victimization is doubly inscribed; she's a victim of one man and of a military system dominated by men. Kara Hultgreen also opts for victim status. In one of her first close-call landings that subsequently was compounded by a violation of standard flying procedure, Hultgreen blames external factors. During her public explanation to a room full of pilots, she "couldn't bring herself to take full responsibility for her bad headwork."<sup>22</sup> Although Hultgreen does not behave as passively as Kelly Flinn, her mother nonetheless represents her as a victim of a series of incidents that *just happened* to work against Hultgreen's aggressive, gung-ho personality. Flinn and Hultgreen's strongest claim to victimhood may stem from the external pressure they received through media attention. In every aspect of their officership these "victims" are successful military members who positively contribute to the mission; however, even as other victim duos such as Margarethe Cammermeyer and James Kennedy demonstrate, the level of responsibility that bolsters professional achievement is markedly absent from

the personal narratives I discuss here. Instead, when it comes to describing how their cases challenge the military's behavioral norms, the victim trope dominates their texts and skews what could otherwise prove to be more credible instances of military injustice.

### **The Naïve Disruption**

Not always but typically present within the rhetorical construction of the "victim" is the trait of ignorance or naïveté. Rules, policies, or in the case of the military, regulations ensure minimum levels of understanding in an effort to preclude potential victims. However, I believe, naïvete also exists as another rhetorical trope of disruption, one that is not necessarily linked to victimhood. In other words, all cases of naïvete do not necessarily form victims. Yet, as with the victim disruption, I consider this narrative trope stereotypically feminine and set in opposition to the masculinized norms of military culture. When feminized images appropriate this already feminine discourse within a highly masculinized military culture, their narratives counter the military pre-fabricated story. Within military culture, there is little to no tolerance of actions stemming from ignorance. The assumption is that dedicated, hard-working professionals are aware of the military's regulations and policies. Consequently, all military leaders subscribe to an unstated notion that they should know be "in the know" about all aspects of their jobs.

Describing himself as a young officer, Schwarzkopf never admits any doubts concerning professional decisions--he simply decides and acts. If senior leadership provides little to no guidance, the decision-making paradigm remains the same, decide, act *and* take responsibility, a prescription for military heroes. I believe ignorance disrupts the seamless nature of this process because to not know is to be feminine and, therefore, also subordinate. In the following heated conversation between Colin Powell

and Schwarzkopf, the rhetorical power hinges on who knows more about the real situation in the Gulf. Schwarzkopf begins by challenging Powell: "For christsakes, Colin, don't you understand? My Marine commander has come to me and said we need to wait. We're talking about Marines' lives!" Powell responds: "Don't *patronize* me with talk about human lives!"<sup>23</sup> Powell assumes that his perceived lack of knowledge subordinates him. Schwarzkopf, now aware of Powell's diminished position, exposes his own doubts: "Sometimes I feel like I'm in a vise---like my head is being squeezed in a vise. Maybe I'm losing it. Maybe I'm losing my objectivity. But I don't think so,"<sup>24</sup> and it is only at this point that Powell calms down. Following what I believe to be a reaffirmation of his masculinized confidence, "But I don't think so," Schwarzkopf shuts his window of vulnerability. As this anecdote suggests, crucial to the hero's successful military story is knowledge and assuredness. Military women and homosexuals who challenge the military's discursive norms from a subordinate position of doubt and naivete have lost the battle before it has even begun.

Claiming ignorance is rarely a viable defense in the military because to do so disrupts the righteous assuredness upon which the military is based. In more colloquial terms, not only do soldiers have to 'know the score,' but they also have to be able to 'kick ass' and 'take names.' As a battalion commander in Vietnam, Schwarzkopf "had to be a complete son of a bitch to get any results, which often entailed losing [his] temper five or six times a day."<sup>25</sup> Women cannot assume this level of aggression and earn the same respect. Of course, there are far too many women who never even attempt to do so. Contrary to the military's image of a knowledgeable and aggressive professional, Kelly Flinn and Margarethe Cammermeyer are women defined by their lack of knowledge and



their passivity. To my disappointment, these military women speak from a stereotypical feminine language of naïveté. Instead of Schwarzkopf's images of emotional impenetrability or vulnerable confidence, their image is closer to the highly derogatory "dumb blonde." The depth of their naivete suggests that they are either lying, ignorant, or brainwashed into thinking that patriotism protects conduct.

In her autobiography, *Proud to Be*, Kelly Flinn either feigns ignorance of military policy and procedure or relies on the traumatic molestation she experienced as a college undergraduate to explain the circumstances of her military discharge. She attributes much of her naivete simply to being "foolish and in love."<sup>26</sup> The Air Force trained her to be a professional, but Flinn "had no knowledge of the working of the human heart. [She] had never read a manual that could tell [her] how to love and be loved."<sup>27</sup> Not only does Flinn's experience do a disservice to the majority of women (military and civilian) who can be in love and still be responsible, but it also suggests that it is the responsibility of the United States Air Force to expand her limited understanding of love. It is disturbing enough that Flinn's individual experiences are not her responsibility, but she constructs her own subordination by characterizing her relationship to the military as that of a child to a parent. Flinn expects her military parents to literally form her: "The Air Force trained me for many things, but did not teach me how to be a human being."<sup>28</sup> In describing her lack as the fault of the military's incomplete human being teaching regime, Flinn is subordinate. Yet, by choosing to see herself as naive, as having never been taught properly, she remains free from having to assume any personal responsibility. Hers is not the image military women want to emulate; yet, her telling of it in this subordinate way reflects on all military women. Ultimately, military women pay the

price for *her* newly found freedom.

Unlike Kelly Flinn who blames her naivete on the fault of military training, job location, inexperience, misguided love, and the repression of her sexual molestation, Margarethe Cammermeyer offers no excuses. As evident throughout her narrative, *Serving in Silence*, Cammermeyer situates her naivete in the stereotypically feminine role of nurturer. The high level of caring and concern that her nursing duties require overflows into her political views or lack thereof. Euphemisms for engaging in war contribute to her political naivete. According to Cammermeyer (and others), Americans are "defenders of freedom, not aggressors."<sup>29</sup> Essentially, Cammermeyer's inflated sense of patriotism is comparable to Schwarzkopf's, so in many ways her patriotic devotion cushions her disruption of *the* military heterosexual image. Yet, Cammermeyer's strong beliefs in the infallible nature of the government make her fall from military grace particularly tragic in a way that it would not be for an overly patriotic military man. The difference is that Cammermeyer speaks in *masculinity a la Americana* as a substitute for her political acumen and personal insight. Her understanding of the US involvement in the Vietnam War represents one occasion of many when she exchanges patriotism for naivete: "I was ignorant of events concerning our buildup of troops, though I was aware of increasing hostilities. However, I didn't question the American involvement. I was a soldier. My job was to be obedient to the mission, and if my government, in its wisdom, said we were needed to help the South Vietnamese people protect themselves from a Communist takeover, I believed it."<sup>30</sup> It isn't until the very end of her story that she suspects that the US was not welcome in Vietnam: "Though it was difficult, I began to realize that our leaders might have been misinformed or may have had a different agenda

than the liberation of the South Vietnamese.”<sup>31</sup> *Might* have been misinformed? *May* have had a different agenda? Clearly, Cammermeyer speaks the patriotic discourse in a way that Kelly Flinn does not—blame free. But her doubts and naivete are indicative of someone who does not even know that she does not know. When it comes to understanding the basic tenets of human sexuality and her own sexual identity, Cammermeyer focuses her text on this extreme naivete. She might believe, as Flinn seems to, that naivete presumes innocence, but instead it removes her from the male-dominated pre-fabricated leadership narrative.

Sexually Cammermeyer is as naïve as Flinn, maybe more so. For much of her adult life as a typical married, mother of four who experiences periodic marital difficulties, she buries her homosexuality. In fact, her husband and her friends are aware of her gayness before she is or at least before she is willing to accept it. However, her lack of understanding for the military consequences is mind baffling. This time, instead of masking her naivete in patriotism, Cammermeyer elides her lesbianism with just one all-American value, honesty: “I really had no idea that day in 1989 what the consequences of my honesty could possibly be.”<sup>32</sup> And again, her choice is an issue of integrity not morality; as she explains, “naïve as it sounds, I didn’t think that in America I would have to choose between being honest and serving my country.”<sup>33</sup> Cammermeyer correctly points out that homosexuality was not the media topic that it is today, and at the time, the regulations had undergone numerous changes: “Unaware of those changes, I believed only that homosexuality was frowned upon. I really didn’t know what I was getting into.”<sup>34</sup> Yet, on two occasions before her interview with the Defense Investigative Service, Cammermeyer’s father cautions her about lesbianism, saying, “I hope it doesn’t

hurt your career.”<sup>35</sup> A man a generation removed and not within military culture is aware that lesbianism is disruptive to military culture in a way that his military daughter is not. Another (male) knowledge-bearer is Cammermeyer’s husband, Harvey. He tells his then wife that the nurse bunking next to them in Vietnam is sexually active. Cammermeyer replies: “It absolutely could not be happening. I believe nurses would never engage in sexual interludes if they were not married.”<sup>36</sup> Years later, her husband is also the first to tell her that she is gay.

Flinn and Cammermeyer represent a range of experiences for military women: on one hand a young woman Air Force pilot and, on the other, a mature, senior Army officer with an entirely different set of professional skills. It is no coincidence that their narratives disrupt the pre-fabricated military norm with a stereotypically feminized trope of naivete. By far the most naïve assumption they make is that military auto/biographies told in this way will affect any positive change.

### **The Immoral Disruption**

Sexual conduct issues seek out and attach themselves to military women and gays in a way that they do not for heterosexual military men. Certainly in Flinn’s case and in the two cases of homosexuality, sexual misconduct is part of the military violation. However, more telling in these auto/biographies is the way in which military members feel the need to justify their sexual conduct and appear sexless in ways heterosexual military men do not. Schwarzkopf acknowledges that he has dated other women when he proposes to his wife: “I want to ask you to marry me. I’m thirty-three years old and I’m no saint. I’ve dated a lot of women, and you’re bound to hear about some and even meet a few. But remember that although I dated them, you’re the one I want to marry.”<sup>37</sup>

Because Schwarzkopf is thirty-three years old, the admission of having previously dated conveniently couched within a marriage proposal is hardly damning. And, nowhere else within the text is his sexual history an issue. Yet, the requirement for women to be sexually pure in act and appearance is a patriotic prerequisite.

Flinn, as she describes, "wasn't particularly cool" in high school because she was outside of the norms of her peers: playing sports instead of cheerleading, driving an old Toyota Corolla instead of BMWs and Mercedeses, and planning to remain a virgin until she was married.<sup>38</sup> All of the women in these military auto/biographies compete in traditionally male sports and raise the issue proudly in their narratives as if this alone shows they can survive in a male-dominated environment. However, shifts within traditional gendered roles such as playing sports are far more tolerable than the suggestion of any sexual impurity. Flinn is a virgin and, as tradition would have it, she is, therefore, pure and good. As a cadet at the Air Force Academy, Flinn claims that she was sexually molested (groped) in her dorm room. I am less concerned with the validity of her claim than with how she talks about the experience: "I buried the memory of the attack as far back as I could in my mind. What I didn't realize was just how deeply it had been burned into my flesh."<sup>39</sup> In what, I believe, is a savvy rhetorical move, Flinn's reverses the damning image of Hester Prynne's adulterous act by re-fashioning the sexual misconduct as a searing mark she must live with but not one she is responsible for. She cannot be culpable for the adultery that follows because she has already been *innocently* branded by molestation. Readers are led to believe Flinn's molestation and adulterous affair are similar situations.

In *Call Sign Revlon*, Kara Hultgreen occupies a slightly different narrative of

immorality from Kelly Flinn, one that is foreshadowed by an upbringing inconsistent with military norms. Prominent throughout the text is Hultgreen's non-conformist behavior. Hultgreen does not fit the military's pre-requisite formula for success; she fulfills no Schwarzkopfian destiny. For example, unlike Schwarzkopf's parents who in spite of their own marital difficulties managed to teach their son values, Hultgreen's were divorced and absent; a maid raised Kara. As a teenager she both succumbed to peer pressure with drinking bouts in the basement of her home, and she stood out as an individual by refusing to lead her basketball team in prayer. Although these events may seem minor in an upbringing which was less than ideal, what is significant about her conduct is how much it foreshadows an adult attitude and behavior markedly out of step with the military's pre-fabricated leadership ethic. She, therefore, has the potential to be immoral.

In the military, the line between conduct and morality is a thin one; it is, however, distinctly clear. As I discuss at greater length in Chapter Four, moral expectation and judgement are indispensable to what I believe is the military's unstated religious norm. However, even with the military's religiously charged atmosphere aside, its leadership ethic is defined by image as much as, if not more than, actual job performance. As an officer, Hultgreen's behavior is not commensurate with this ethic; however, her behavior does image her as "one of the guys." The following are representative examples of such behavior: She has an affair with a "technically" married man;<sup>40</sup> after maximizing the score on her fitness test, she vomits in the parking lot;<sup>41</sup> she recklessly rides a motorcycle;<sup>42</sup> her journal entries are full of profanity;<sup>43</sup> she goes to a Key West strip bar in the hopes of seeing a stripper, whom she's been told, she resembles.<sup>44</sup> To many in

civilian life, these conduct issues are not relevant professionally. In fact, her mother calls Hultgreen's unregulated behavior part of Kara's "maturing process."<sup>45</sup> However, the reputation of the military rests precariously on the edge of such images, images that I believe enhance or at least maintain the standing for military men but detract from the images of military women. Paradoxically, military women have to be "be one of the guys" to succeed by imitating masculinized behaviors which prove professionally toxic. Military culture simply does not accept the image of the woman warrior.

Narratives of immorality favor no particular gender when it comes to homosexuality. As is evident from the narratives of Margarethe Cammermeyer and James Kennedy, homosexual behavior radically disrupts the military's heterosexual norm. In Cammermeyer's case, larger cultural narratives of moral goodness (honesty, motherhood, and monogamy) temper her otherwise disruptive image. Because Kennedy has no such narratives intervening on his behalf, he hides his homosexuality. Certainly as a closeted-homosexual, Kennedy was not disruptive to military norms, and he went to great lengths to keep it that way. In an effort to preclude investigation during his military service, Kennedy masks his sexual orientation by writing about the female gender in his diary;<sup>46</sup> he dates women;<sup>47</sup> and he keeps "a picture of a bikini-clad Hawaiian model on [his] desk for cover."<sup>48</sup> Frustrating is the notion that he can "pass." He is able to don the heterosexual persona, as a gay male, and appear as "one of the guys" in a manner that military women cannot, even if they take on behaviors of military men (as I just discussed in the case of Kara Hultgreen). But, is there a limit to the degree of sexual passing?

Kennedy's narrative is sexually hyped beyond the norms of either orientation.

Dominating the text are details of sexually explicit desires and acts described through a litany of prohibitive close encounters and short-term relationships. In more detail than most Americans would care to hear, Kennedy discusses what turns him on sexually, for how long, and with whom. He offsets and upsets feminized perceptions of his homosexuality with a super-masculinized position of promiscuity. As an openly gay ex-military man, Kennedy disrupts both the norms of military culture and the expectations of straight men. In other words, his narrative disrupts because of the soldier he is not and of the gay playboy man he is—both identities pivot on degrees of immorality of his choosing to pass.

As he reminds readers in his narrative, Kennedy is not alone. He echoes the rhetorical patterns that reflect the freedom struggles of African-Americans, women, gays, and even hopeless romantics. He conflates elements of these narratives into one story of freedom. Unfortunately, Kennedy's autobiography so lacks intellectual rigor and depth that his personal testimony hinders the other groups' struggles. In the next section, I discuss how Kennedy's text and other military auto/biographies appropriate the narratives of one group, African Americans.

### **The Racial Disruption**

James E. Kennedy opens his autobiography, *About-Face*, with a section entitled "Thirty Years After Martin Luther King," a description of a group of veterans and active-duty military people who were being discharged for being gay. In the Washington, D.C. setting, Kennedy reflects on King's memory: "I was in our nation's capital, looking across the same Mall over which Martin Luther King had gazed when he gave his "I Have a Dream" speech. Just as King had done thirty years earlier, I was standing for



what I believed in: that gay Americans are entitled to the *same* rights as all other Americans.”<sup>49</sup> Margarethe Cammermeyer, the highest-ranking officer to challenge the military’s antigay policy, also invokes Martin Luther King’s dream phraseology during the final statement of her court-martial: “Thirty years ago . . . when I joined the military, I had a dream of one day being in a position of becoming Chief Nurse of the Army Nurse Corps.”<sup>50</sup> And although she captures King’s sentiments a bit more indirectly, Kelly Flinn has a hope “that every child in America who has great dreams—boy or girl—will be allowed to soar.”<sup>51</sup> These military members construct Martin Luther King as *their* civil rights advocate by appropriating African-American narratives to further their cause under the all-inclusive heading of discrimination.

Of course, Americans debate the issue of gays in the military on the platform of basic civil rights. And Kelly Flinn, also seeking justice and judicial equality, stands on an adjoining civil rights platform. Therefore, the ways in which these co-civil rights advocates invoke King’s rhetoric is to be expected. However, I offer another explanation: disrupters of military norms adopt black narratives as a function of gender first, civil rights second. When spoken by women such as Cammermeyer and Flinn I believe the “dream” loses its rhetorical strength. The words mean little without a masculinized image to back them up, and within military culture they mean even less when voiced by victimized women who speak only from rhetorical sites of disruption. Yet, women’s military auto/biographies need to rhetorically piggyback on African American narratives to lend credibility to their own issues (homosexuality, sexual harassment, gender discrimination). Kennedy, too, as the feminized gay man, is the victimized woman who needs the protective, validating narrative of a black male in a way

that Schwarzkopf's story does not.

As I will discuss in Chapter Three, the media's *images* of women are routinely paired with blacks as if essential to the woman's voice is that it be escorted in by a black (male) narrative. I use the term "escort" and not "join" because it is only within society at large that race is a more discriminating factor than gender. Within contemporary military culture I contend that this relationship is inverted—the military has a greater likelihood of discriminating based on gender, not race. Because gender subordinates itself to race, women cannot "join" the black petitioners as equal partners. To do so would assume that the issues of gender and race are on the same scale in the military and they are not. Instead, women allow themselves to be "escorted" in by African-American males who have already fought the acceptance battle in the military. Narratives, not just images, lend themselves to this same rationale. For military women (and again I include the perception of Kennedy's homosexuality as feminized), their automatic assumption of African American discourse is a necessary attempt to speak as males and in doing so, to validate their stories. The victim and naïve disruptions, which I discussed earlier and this chapter, forestall this validation attempt.

### **The Non-disruptive Un-woman**

There are a number of reasons to respect Rhonda Cornum's professional success prior to her heroic survival as a POW. She's a military officer, a doctor, and accomplished medical researcher. For many military women, Cornum's service is the quintessential example of success. Yet, because my perspective is on the way Cornum's story gets told, and specifically, how gender refashions its telling, I believe her presence within military culture is much more complicated. In an effort to characterize her various

representations, I call Cornum the “non-disruptive un-woman.” Non-disruptive because she conforms to the pre-fabricated military norms by appearing gender-less and speaking in *masculinity a la Americana*, which I defined earlier as patriotic discourse that is inherently masculine. To truly be non-disruptive within the military’s pre-fabricated story, Cornum also appropriates other feminized narratives that subordinate her image. Another aspect of her presence is that of the “un-woman,” a form of gender coating (not coding) which hides or muffles femininity without necessarily appropriating masculine tropes. In other words, it may not ever be possible to fit completely the image of all-American male hero, but shrinking that which is stereotypically feminine by becoming an un-woman certainly lowers the hurdles. I open my discussion of Rhonda Cornum, the non-disruptive un-woman, by examining how closely she shadows the military exemplar, Norman Schwarzkopf.

In a number of ways Rhonda Cornum fits the Schwarzkopfian norm by fully assuming patriotic (male) rhetorical patterns and behaviors. She believes first and foremost in the necessity to serve, a perspective she does not have from the outset of her career, but one that matures with her military longevity. Her concern as an officer and a doctor is for the health and well being of those under her supervision, and, like Schwarzkopf, her commitment to integrity is clear from the start. In a letter to her mother Cornum writes, “I could lie and say I am safe in a nice quiet medical job somewhere, but . . . . I don’t lie, and haven’t for twenty years.”<sup>52</sup> Few “typical” Americans could make such a claim; as with Schwarzkopf, she fulfills the heroic pre-requisite of integrity.

Also, like all “good” soldiers, Cornum is married, a must for the majority of successful military leaders. Because this is her *second* marriage and, as such,

inconsistent with military's expectation of unbroken commitment, Cornum must address it. However, she does so in just a few sentences that are interwoven with her metaphoric marriage to the military via basic training: "The other thing I learned being on my own for basic training at Fort Sam Houston was that I didn't want to be married anymore. Not that it was a mistake to have been married; it was just that a chapter of my life had ended."<sup>53</sup> While there is no military autobiographical requirement to raise painful personal issues, it is the manner in which Cornum recasts her divorce as just another one of those realizations trainees have during basic training that minimizes and keeps it in the norm when, in actuality, military culture is not so forgiving.

In addition to meeting the heroic pre-requisites, Cornum has the right (gung-ho) male attitude. As I discussed earlier, Schwarzkopf's art is in his aggression, the tough-guy approach, but Cornum has to be the guy by comparing the rush of war to sex: "Five days ago I was (I think) the first American female service member to fly into Iraq, get out of my aircraft, be a part of taking the first prisoners of war the 101<sup>st</sup> took, and fly back out with these guys in my helicopter. No, I wasn't scared. It was in fact the most exciting thing since sex I've done."<sup>54</sup> She writes these comments in a letter to her parents. I doubt, as a woman, she would be compelled to make the same connection to a room full of military men.

Cornum's exaggerated mimicking of *Americana* moves from hyped-masculinity to being pathetically disingenuous. As a returning POW, Cornum "was embarrassed to be injured and felt un-military."<sup>55</sup> So tremendous is the pressure on women to appear fit, able, and ready for duty that even as a freed POW Cornum does not overcome it—she's "embarrassed to be injured." Her reaction has an entirely different tone from pilots who

are shot down (possibly as a result of their own poor flying), subsequently rescued, and immediately hailed as heroes. For example, Captain Scott O'Grady's post-rescue foot problems kept him from returning to flying for months, but in a barrage of television interviews he hardly appears "embarrassed" or "un-military." Also important during Cornum's post-rescue is that other people do not feel sorry for her. Captain O'Grady, on the other hand, openly weeps during tape replays of the radio conversation that he had with his rescuers. Military men do not command by crying, but my point is that, as with Captain O'Grady, they have an emotional latitude that military women on the emotionless masculinized front do not. Finally, my last observation about her rescue: Cornum channels her insecurities and doubts into mind-numbing patriotism. After she has apologized to General Schwarzkopf for not being able to salute (she had two broken arms!), a reporter asks Cornum how she feels. In reply, she shouts, "Airborne!" As Cornum herself explains, "'Airborne' was the most positive, gung-ho way of saying I was glad to be home but ready to go back to war if necessary. The single word perfectly captured my feelings of joy and pride."<sup>56</sup> In training scenarios, the phrase "Airborne" is a mindless automatic rallying cry signifying accomplishment and group identification. Cornum's use of it here to describe her post POW experience is beyond "gung-ho," it is inflated institutionalized patriotism that within military culture drowns in its own familiarity.

The danger for all service members is that such strongly held beliefs shut down other perspectives. Because military women have a greater likelihood of over-appropriating patriotic discourse in an effort to blend in with their male counterparts, they are particularly susceptible to limited viewpoints. As I discussed earlier, Cammermeyer's

overly charged patriotic rhetoric precludes any criticism of Vietnam. Cornum wholeheartedly believes in the US's military involvement this time in the Gulf: "I thought the war was a good idea. I don't have time for people who say there should be no war."<sup>57</sup> Women resign themselves to demonizing the enemy as the misguided other because that is what it takes to be one of the guys. Even while under the care of Iraqi nurses, Cornum feels pity for one of the women who surely "had been thoroughly brainwashed by her government."<sup>58</sup> Ironical isn't it? I doubt that if a reporter were to ask the Iraqi nurse about her feelings that she would offer the Pavlovian "Airborne!" response.

For many military women the pressure to fit in does not necessarily mean being one of the guys as much as it means *not* being a woman. At the beginning of this section, I termed this form of gender coating "un-woman." Paradoxically, many military women who are, by profession, untraditional, prefer to assume the military masculine norm than to exist with any attention paid to their gender difference. In fact, whether or not they occupy any aspects of the pre-fabricated masculinized norm, military women have a particular aversion that removes it from their grasp.

Being labeled a "feminist" does so.

I quote the following statement by Kelly Flinn at length because of the ubiquitous nature of her anti-feminist views:

I had never considered myself a feminist. I'd always thought that all the shouting and screaming about women's rights actually got in the way of women's advancement. For one thing, it created a lot of resentment. For another, it made women different---separated them into "women pilots," not just pilots---and different very rarely meant the same thing as equal. I'd always

believed that I was equal and had achieved all that I had achieved because I'd done my best as a person, not a woman. I'd been a person all my life. I wasn't going to start being a *woman* now.<sup>59</sup>

Interesting is the way in which this young woman holds in place the image of a feminist as "shouting and screaming." If that image ever had proven accurate, it was well before her time. Flinn's skewed perception exposes the gendered biases of her inherited formative narratives. Borne out of this erroneous image is the faulty logic that the feminists are at fault for the ensuing societal "resentment" and for making women "different." Women's difference stems from the far greater likelihood that they initially will be perceived as incompetent or inferior in ways that their male counterparts will not. Why does this escape her sensibilities? Flinn closes her viewpoint with a quasi womanhood, or I should say "person" hood, creed by listing what she believes and what she still wants to believe. She doesn't have to worry about not being a "*woman* now," because she hasn't stopped being a child. Unfortunately, Flinn's feminist label aversion is not the exception. Certainly, (military) women should not be judged or pre-judged by their gender, but it is unrealistic to think that gender is invisible within military culture. The military *is* a male-dominated culture injected with hyper-masculinized norms and behaviors. Denying women's difference, particularly when done so in-house, undercuts potentially positive changes.

As with Kelly Flinn, Rhonda Cornum shuns the feminist label because she "comes from a long line of strong women" and "women in [her] family did not burn their bras, they just went out and did what they wanted to do."<sup>60</sup> Of course, I'm happy for her. But obviously, her rough-tough lineage has formed her misguided impression of gender

harmony in the service: "That's how the army is: when we're busy doing our jobs, it doesn't matter to anyone if I'm a woman or a man. We're all soldiers; or as they say in the army, we're all green."<sup>61</sup> Uniforms build a sense of camaraderie, but they do not disguise gender. I suspect a closer look at the evolution of women's uniform designs might shed some light on these differences. My point is that Cornum's fortune in experiencing only one incident where her gender proved to be an issue (rescuing wounded soldiers from combat areas) does not negate the daily struggles with gender disruption experienced by other military women.

Cornum herself may not realize the degree to which she self-negates gender and occupies the space of un-woman. For example, while describing her molestation by an Iraqi soldier, she attributes her screaming to the excruciating pain caused when "he tried to yank the flight suit down over my shoulder," not the unwanted nature of the attack itself. Cornum, therefore, does not scream as a vulnerable *woman* but as an injured *soldier*. Remarkably she expects the soldier-not-woman distinction to be visible as she goes on to explain, "I was not thinking of myself as a woman. I was amazed that this Iraqi soldier could only see me as a woman"<sup>62</sup>. Despite her un-woman efforts, the Iraqi soldier does see her as a woman. Cornum undoubtedly would be equally dumbfounded by the possibility that U.S. servicemen, although they are not attempting to rape her, also experience the visible realities of her gender. In other words, Cornum's narrow realization, which is indicative of her uninformed views of women in the military, allows only for male-foreign-soldiers-who-want-to-rape as the kind of men who would notice her notice gender first.

Had Kara Hultgreen spoken to Cornum she could have enlightened her about how



some of America's own male soldiers perceive gender. Because Hultgreen's Tailhook experience is perhaps the most telling incident of denial and distancing that comes from being un-woman, I briefly broaden my focus to include it. Although she was only there for part of the evening, Hultgreen received three unwanted advances from a man who eventually ended up biting her right buttock. As if out of a movie scene, Hultgreen has a friend hold her drink and proceeds to deck the man. Yet, during a television interview in the spring of 1993 when she is asked about her experience, she replies, "No, I was not assaulted. What happened to me was irritating, and easily handled, and then blown out of proportion."<sup>63</sup> A man bites her buttock and she is not assaulted? Hultgreen writes in her journal that she thinks "it's really sad about what happened to all of *those* women" [my emphasis].<sup>64</sup> As the un-woman, she is not as vulnerable as the other women within the military's hyper-male dominated culture who acknowledge their femininity.

Some women become un-women in appearance. Again, they are not looking masculine as much as they are not looking feminine. Flinn claims she tried to cover up her femininity to fit in: "I never wore makeup and kept my hair extremely short";<sup>65</sup> "I never wore makeup in uniform; it made me look like too much of a woman."<sup>66</sup> Flinn's comments are more applicable within the pilot community because flying aircraft missions—involving helmets and gas masks—does not lend itself to make-up. However, I do not believe the military's masculinized norms call for make-up free women. Military women's professional image demands a more polished look than military men and this look is largely influenced by larger societal expectations. Uniforms have a much narrower margin for gendered interpretation. For example, women may choose to wear slacks or a skirt with the formal service dress uniform and their choice sends a gendered

message. Although Margarethe Cammermeyer hadn't worn her military skirt in so long that she couldn't fit into it, she chooses to wear it, in lieu of slacks, for her military review board. She says, "For the last few years, I had worn pants with the jacket, but today I needed to wear the skirt."<sup>67</sup> Cammermeyer offers no explanation. Let me: wearing pants constructs her as the un-woman (and a gay woman) on a day that she wishes to be seen as neither. In the military, wearing uniform skirts is a billboard for femininity. Military women who exercise their option to regularly wear pants do so at a risk to their professional image.

Rhonda Cornum's un-woman attitude may limit her perspective, but it does not detract from her inherent skills as a professional and a soldier. She is clearly the closest fit to Schwarzkopf's image. Yet, despite her overall strengths, she does lapse into rhetoric that is saturated in feminine sentimentality. The following examples reveal how this feminine sentimentality ties women to vulnerable subordinate images, which detract from professional military women. When she became chief of the Physical Exam Section at Lyster Hospital, her "greatest innovation was a simple one: [she] made everyone on the staff smile."<sup>68</sup> Her "'smile policy'" warded off clinic complaints for six months. It's not only that Schwarzkopf would never implement such a policy; it's that no military man would because that is not the kind of job performance that makes heroes. Cornum is also stereotypically feminine in using personal pet names for her husband in the text. He is her "honey bear" and she is his "wifelet."<sup>69</sup> The pet names are highly personal insights that the military's hyper-masculinized image would not sustain. Would Schwarzkopf retain his commander mystique as, say, a "honey bear"? Finally, I raise Cornum's contribution to the love-story cloud that has to hang over every woman's narrative, but

not every soldier's. Cornum had an agreement with her husband for each of them to swallow their wedding rings if they were ever taken prisoner. She *apologizes* to her husband for not being able to follow through with the plan on account of her broken arms.<sup>70</sup> The romantic sentimentality, which is not patriotic, is clearly over the top.

### **Conclusion**

Military culture tells one story of its heroes. My attempt in this chapter has been to expose the prefabricated norms of that military story as distinctly heterosexual, Christian, and male and to investigate the ways in which military women and homosexuals disrupt those norms. Interesting to me is the way in which women and homosexuals in the auto/biographical narratives I have selected here tell their stories within other stories of patriotism, victimization, naivete, and race. However, I believe the narratives that are the most damning to military women are the ones that appear to fit in to military norms, but do so only by denying gender issues. Auto/biography offers a venue to refashion the telling of our military heroes, one that women and homosexuals need to rhetorically master if they are ever to be truly included in it.

## Notes to Chapter II

<sup>1</sup> Rhonda Cornum, "Soldiering: The Enemy Doesn't Care If You're Female," *It's Our Military Too! Women and the U.S. Military Academy*, ed. Judith Hicks Stiehm (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996) 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> Personal interview with an upperclassmen, May 1998.

<sup>3</sup> H. Norman Schwarzkopf, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Linda Grey Bantam Books, 1992) 24.

<sup>4</sup> James Kennedy's father is also in the military; however Kennedy carves out a distinctly separate career path by joining the legal corps not the "regular" Army. Therefore, unlike Schwarzkopf, he does not mirror his father as a military fighting soldier.

<sup>5</sup> Refers to West Point's alumni. The long gray line depicts the graduating cadets'.

<sup>6</sup> Schwarzkopf 384.

<sup>7</sup> Schwarzkopf 384.

<sup>8</sup> The title of Schwarzkopf's autobiography comes from a longer quote taken from a television interview with Barbara Walters, March 15, 1991: "It doesn't take a hero to order men into battle. It takes a hero to be one of those men who goes into battle."

<sup>9</sup> Schwarzkopf 1.

<sup>10</sup> Schwarzkopf 430.

<sup>11</sup> Schwarzkopf 14.

<sup>12</sup> Schwarzkopf 14.

<sup>13</sup> Schwarzkopf 140.

<sup>14</sup> Schwarzkopf 141.

<sup>15</sup> After women were admitted to service academy's the carte blanche ordering of miniature rings became a point of contention. Female graduates often ordered the smaller graduation ring because the larger male ring dwarfed their hands. The larger male ring could not be ordered en masse so essentially the primary symbol of graduating from a military academy failed to distinguish between female graduates who had earned the right to wear the rings and girlfriends, wives, and family members who had not.

<sup>16</sup> Schwarzkopf 144.

<sup>17</sup> Schwarzkopf 380.

<sup>18</sup> Bella Brodski and Celeste Schenck, *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

<sup>19</sup> Banner 165-66.

<sup>20</sup> Kelly Flinn, *Proud to Be* (New York: Random House, 1997) 159.

<sup>21</sup> Flinn 159.

<sup>22</sup> Sally Spears, *Call Sign Revlon* (Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1998) 92.

<sup>23</sup> Schwarzkopf 444.

<sup>24</sup> Schwarzkopf 444.

<sup>25</sup> Schwarzkopf 159.

<sup>26</sup> Flinn xiv.

<sup>27</sup> Flinn xiv.

<sup>28</sup> Flinn xv.

<sup>29</sup> Margarethe Cammermeyer, *Serving in Silence* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994)

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<sup>30</sup> Cammermeyer 74.

- <sup>31</sup> Cammermeyer 303.
- <sup>32</sup> Cammermeyer 3.
- <sup>33</sup> Cammermeyer 5.
- <sup>34</sup> Cammermeyer 228.
- <sup>35</sup> Cammermeyer 222-23.
- <sup>36</sup> Cammermeyer 115.
- <sup>37</sup> Schwarzkopf 141.
- <sup>38</sup> Flinn 10.
- <sup>39</sup> Flinn 45.
- <sup>40</sup> Spears 49.
- <sup>41</sup> Spears 182.
- <sup>42</sup> Spears x.
- <sup>43</sup> Spears 174.
- <sup>44</sup> Spears 156.
- <sup>45</sup> Spears x.
- <sup>46</sup> James E. Kennedy, *About-Face* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1995) 68.
- <sup>47</sup> Kennedy 73.
- <sup>48</sup> Kennedy 110.
- <sup>49</sup> Kennedy 3.
- <sup>50</sup> Cammermeyer 273.
- <sup>51</sup> Flinn 249.
- <sup>52</sup> Cornum 133.
- <sup>53</sup> Cornum 95.

<sup>54</sup> Cornum 133.

<sup>55</sup> Cornum 162.

<sup>56</sup> Cornum 163.

<sup>57</sup> Cornum 146.

<sup>58</sup> Cornum 143.

<sup>59</sup> Flinn 123.

<sup>60</sup> Cornum 90.

<sup>61</sup> Cornum 68.

<sup>62</sup> Cornum 50.

<sup>63</sup> Spears 128.

<sup>64</sup> Spears 130.

<sup>65</sup> Flinn 39.

<sup>66</sup> Flinn 131.

<sup>67</sup> Cammermeyer 263.

<sup>68</sup> Cornum 103-104.

<sup>69</sup> Cornum 165.

<sup>70</sup> Cornum 173.

### Chapter III: Gendered Resistance in Pop Culture Television/Film

"War is show business. That's why we're here."

--*Wag the Dog*

Veteran's Day salutes all military service members, particularly those who gave their lives for our country—our national heroes. And as with other holidays, Veteran's Day is about remembering national myths, particularly those heroic actions constituting America's legacy of 'win-win' battle lore. On November 11, 1998, among the day's scheduled movie listings was *Private Benjamin*, a 1980 film casting Goldie Hawn in the first and what has become the enduring image of a female soldier. On another channel television crews covered astronaut John Glenn's second voyage into space. Thirty-six years since he first became an all-American hero, his image not only endures, but also regenerates itself in American culture, and for that reason many Americans associate all United States astronauts with only one man, John Glenn. But Judy Benjamin's fictitious image is equally as iconic as Glenn's. Despite the marked advances of women in the military since 1980, bumbling Judy Benjamin remains the larger-than-life mythic icon not only for military women, but for all women taking on jobs traditionally and exclusively held by men. Her status leads me into this chapter, for I am interested in the ways in which pop culture's constructed memory depicts military (including militant) women. Although film and television have provided space for military women to register in public consciousness (in a way that literature has not), images of military women are consistently weakened by gender biases. There is always a weakness, always a vulnerability, and always an exception to the rule to account for strong and powerful women figures and how Americans remember them. Judy Benjamin is no John Glenn.



In his interpretive essay, "The Bomb's Womb and the Genders of War," Klaus Theweleit claims that "The memory of events is a *production* by (at least) two people. It's simultaneously a reconstruction and an artifact. So it's not possible to tell the reconstruction of a 'past' from the construction of a momentary presence."<sup>1</sup> His emphasis on production suggests a free flowing power that can, as he goes on to say, "construct present historical thinking."<sup>2</sup> Once two events become linked in the construction of a momentary present, the past is forever buttressed by the present and vice versa. So, for example, surely not all Americans wanted Glenn's flight repeated; but most Americans identified with its historical, slingshot effect—the same phenomenon, I believe, Theweleit describes. Therefore, the issue is not that Glenn flew a space mission in 1962 and again in 1998, but what kind of story bridges these two events and how such a story develops. In other words, it is not possible for John Glenn's second journey to exist as an isolated event. The cultural power of Glenn's second journey is that it reinforced the memory of the first—the identity of an American hero--and it also defined, yet again, the universal American hero as male.

The conditions that ally a fictional character's identity (Private Benjamin's) with John Glenn's hero status are gendered. Essentially, audiences have to *forget* women's progress in order to maintain a long-term identification with the comic heroine, while they simply *replay* the story of American heroes like John Glenn. Also, because few women's narratives are as powerful as Glenn's, there is no easy replay option. If women have any hope of being positively incorporated into America's national identity, women as American heroes demand national *remembering*. I believe what is impeding this process is what Theweleit terms abstract or programmatic memories—memories that are

neither lies, truths, nor actual events, but rather constructions that allow speakers to live in their present moment.<sup>3</sup> If, as in his example, pilots believe that flying a certain number of missions ensures their safety, then that memory is constructed solely as a way to function in the present. Essentially, what is remembered is the historical hope of events regardless of the way these events actually play out. Theweleit concludes that such memories are spoken by "A power without feelings wanting to make you a person according to its own image."<sup>4</sup> Consenting to the "hoped for story" has a formative function, and military women are especially vulnerable to programmatic memories because hoping for survival is in the very nature of their jobs. However, the only image society constructs as capable of bearing that risk is a masculine one. True, the past twenty years have ushered in capable, intelligent women pilots and astronauts, and recent movies have made some effort to move the public away from the Private Benjamin persona with films such as *Courage Under Fire*. Yet, none of these films appear in Veteran's Day tributes. They won't appear until programmatic memories, previously built on culturally dominant male images, are retold in national stories that encompass women soldiers.

National stories are regularly subjected to gender wars. For example, Susan Jeffords examines how women's stories get co-opted by men. Specifically, in *The Remasculinization of America* she discusses the subtle and not so subtle forms in which the media reinforced dominant masculine ideology as part of public consciousness and how closely those moves were tied to a political agenda.<sup>5</sup> In tracing the media's portrayal of military and militant women in film since 1980, I continue with her discussion, but shift the focus to women. In other words, while the remasculinization of America was

taking place, underlying feminine images were telling their own story. It is a story of images. I believe the slow evolution of military/militant women can be traced in the film images of the sexualized nurse, the incapable military girl, and the capable military mom.<sup>6</sup> These three images challenge but do not successfully resist the masculine coding of war, warfare, and death. A fourth and final image in women's cinematic evolution, what I call the resistant woman, is evident in two films, *Paradise Road* (1997) and *GI Jane* (1997). Women in both films, while reinforcing traditional gendered codes, also disrupt patriarchal domination and resist feminine labeling. In so doing they question and undo traditional gender codes so that John Glenn's media blitz and blockbuster films such as Stephen Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), which I will also discuss, do not so easily trump the few positive images of resistant women. I turn now to my stories of image.

### **Sexualized Nurses**

Florence Nightingale established the first enduring image of war nurses. As with Private Benjamin, Florence Nightingale's image secures both a story and an expectation for women so sustained by the media that it has still not been successfully overcome in popular culture. In lieu of Nightingale's nursing achievements, what has survived in public consciousness is her saintly caretaker image. Such an image not only maintains the traditional gendered role of women as nurturers, but also elevates it to a sacrosanct duty. Consequently, the public's mythic impression is that nurses help the war effort succeed well within the bounds of what is expected from them as *women*, not soldiers. Subsequent pop culture images trace Nightingale's image by rendering military nurses as motherly first, saintly second, and always as women who should be shielded from

battlefield horrors. These superficial memories trivialize the service of the nurses who follow by depicting their challenging life and death situations as routine, matter-of-fact experiences. So engrained is the innocuous caretaker image that it literally and figuratively keeps women's war contributions always on the fringe of garnering deserved national recognition. Caring for America's war wounded keeps women near the violence of war without requiring them to fight in it. One homogenous image ensures women can heal, but not defend.

As early as the 1970s television shows such as *Star Trek* and *M.A.S.H.* reinforced the notion that nurses should stay on the perimeter of actual combat. In the original *Star Trek* series, Nurse Chapel fit Nightingale's example. Above and beyond the religious connotations of her name, Nurse *Christine Chapel*, she proved to be the epitome of good conduct and character.<sup>7</sup> TV nurses lived up to Nightingale's saintly legacy, like Nurse Chapel, or they became sexually caricatured like *M.A.S.H.*'s chief nurse, "Hot Lips" Houlihan, a woman defined by her freely flowing blonde hair, full "come-hither" lips, and shapely figure. Tarnishing Major Houlihan with a sexually-hyped reputation diminishes the accomplishments of a head nurse, accomplishments that would otherwise describe a highly competent leader. As a way to circumvent (unacceptable) images of competent women commanders, television reasserts and distorts women's sexuality, sending the message that a feminized presence is thoroughly inconsistent with the masculinized world of war.

Because *M.A.S.H.* is a television comedy, it would be easy to dismiss much of "Hot Lips" Houlihan's sexual caricature as simple humor. After all, other actors, especially the men, exhibit various unmilitary quirks. Alan Alda ("Hawkeye" Pierce), for example,

is as equally distanced from combat as "Hot Lips" simply because of his loose adherence to military regimen. However, there is a marked difference as to how this humor characterizes leadership images according to gender. Unlike "Hot Lips" feminine caricature, the (un)equally humorous men hold the highest positions on the post: doctor, priest, and unit commander. Leadership and power, the essential elements for combat, reside with those media images that remain free of stereotypically feminine traits. Such images haunt the real lives of women; they do not have the same implications for men.

Television's distinctly feminine image both separates nurses from and subordinates them to the masculinity of war, but this repositioning is not only performed by women. Two of *M.A.S.H.*'s male characters, Radar and Klinger, are examples of how the feminization image excludes soldiers from battle. Although not sexualized to the extremes of "Hot Lips" Houlihan, Radar O'Reilly and Klinger also adopt feminine characteristics (Klinger to a greater extent) which distort women's images. Both men also play caretaker-only (not leadership) roles. In order for the (traditionally feminine) caretaker role to fit into the (traditionally masculine) war environment, *M.A.S.H.* portrays these caretaker-only soldiers as harmless women. Radar O'Reilly takes care of the commander but sleeps with a teddy bear, drinks grape Nihil, and strongly associates with his hometown values. Klinger, a soldier hoping to earn a section eight medical discharge (mental disorder), cross-dresses as a woman. The sensitive child-like nature of Radar and the crazed shenanigans of Klinger construct feminized images in need of protection, alien to war, and disconnected from combat. Such images are not new. They are representative of a culture that puts its "women and children first" and preserves the males' role as protector.

Ultimately, television's distorted images of the saintly nurse and the sexually charged nurse survive at the expense of actual nurses' war narratives that have long been forgotten. Names that forge a legacy of "firsts" in the nursing profession, such as Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, Dorothea Dix, Louisa May Alcott, and Dr. Mary Edwards Walker (Walker being the first and only woman ever to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor), are far removed from media's more marketable nursing images of innocence and/or sex. So too are the more recent women nurses and their narratives such as Patricia Walsh's *Forever Sad Hearts* (1982) and Lynda Van Devanter's *Home Before Morning* (1983),<sup>8</sup> both autobiographical accounts of nurses in Vietnam which never made it to public consciousness.<sup>9</sup>

The military policy changes that came about late in the 1970s and the early 80s expanded the images of television's military nurses and helped give voice to the previously muted service of military women. In 1976, women's admission to military service academies truly disrupted the image of the sexualized war nurse. For the first time, women had the opportunity to be commissioned as military officers under the same four-year training program as had been previously open only to men. Now, unlike the other commissioning sources, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and Officer Training School (OTS), military service academies are designed to immerse men and women in the rigor and regimen of an extended military life, while simultaneously providing for their academic education. Women's admission to military academies seemed inconsistent with the mission of this particular commissioning source. Purported to be elitist institutions for only admitting the "cream of the crop," military academies, until recently, trained their officer candidates (cadets) specifically for *combat* career

fields. Perhaps to muffle the new voices of women as combatants, or as a not so subtle reminder that fighting in combat is still a man's world, women's admission did not alter the inscription looming over the United States Air Force Academy's entrance, "Bring Me Men."<sup>10</sup>

Despite the marked attention women received in the 80s, the sentiment behind "Bring Me Men" looms and causes women to redefine their image in a manner that only further divides them. Particularly when it was still a novelty for women to be serving in other than the medical corps, female service members who were *not nurses* resisted embracing the image of nurses as soldiers. These women found themselves doubly challenged. First, they had to conform to masculine military standards which for some meant looking more masculine and for other holding combat positions. They also had to work against the flawed assumption that as military women they were *automatically* nurses. Shunning the feminized caretaker image was a way for these service women who were trying to be pilots, engineers, and company commanders to redraw and/or eliminate gender boundaries, not just shift within a particular gender code. Service women looked like their medical counterparts, but professionally needed to identify with the men.

The inherent tensions between female nurses and other service women are not just a consequence of media images, but are also a result of distinctions in military command authority and education shortfalls. Medical personnel fall under a different command structure from the rest of the armed services, and as such, they are also considered separately for promotion. The separate but equal system makes it is easy for service members, especially women who are not nurses, to consider medical personnel less than "real" officers. Connie Reeves attributes this erroneous perception to "a severe lack in

the military of education.”<sup>11</sup> Her concerns are for the newest generations of women who are not educated in their professional legacy. Education begins with recognizing that medical personnel are under a separate promotion system only because of their medical specialization, not because they have met a lower standard. “Nurses are not ethereal angels of mercy” who are somehow separate and protected from military demands, but they go through the same training as male recruits: 20-mile hikes, seventy-five yard live fire, and a low crawl course.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the best way to mitigate the residual tension between female nurses and other service women is to keep women’s war images consistent. Noncombatant nurses often found themselves in combat, and these women saw “more death and destruction than the average soldier.”<sup>13</sup> Ideally, learning about military women’s contributions means not seeing yesterday’s stereotypical nursing image as today’s limiting one.

Internal fissures concerning gendered issues are rarely isolated within a culture, especially a military one. Linda Bird Francke claims that the accomplishments and contributions of military nurses are both masculinized for the sake of feminist agendas and feminized for purely political ones. In many respects this external on-going tension has, according to Francke, left these women “being somewhat gender neutral.”<sup>14</sup> Such images are hardly neutral. I want to stress that the media’s images of military women outlast and trump both agendas. Television’s saintly and sexualized military nurses set all military service women well behind standards of competence they actually were already meeting and surpassing.

### **The Incapable Military Girl**

It would be difficult to discern which image has proved more harmful to women’s



potential as combatants: the woman who is treated as if she did not participate in the war at all or the incapable military girl who participates armed only with her naïveté and her sex. In 1980, *Private Benjamin* emerged as the “new military woman.” Coincidentally, the timing of the film’s release also christened the first women academy graduates (the Class of 1980) to military life. Judy Benjamin (Goldie Hawn), a perky, fun-loving blonde who has dreamed since she was eight years old of “a big house, nice clothes, two closets, a live-in maid, and a professional man for a husband,” joins the military after her second husband (Yale) dies on their wedding night while they are having sex. Judy’s personal tragedy begets an ideological one. The message repeated throughout the film is that Judy doesn’t know what to do with herself if she’s not married; yet her very short-term marriage to Yale is full of sexually demeaning treatment which she accepts without reproach. On the occasion of their wedding reception, despite Judy’s protests, Yale demands oral sex. Also, during a second sexual encounter, which Judy similarly protests, Yale tells her to “just lift [her] back leg.” Mr. Benjamin, Judy’s father, wants his daughter to be “well taken care of,” but it is clear from his detached ordering around of his daughter (“get me a cigarette” and “get me a match”) that women are financially supported only so that they can continue to pamper him. Essentially, Judy has swapped a demeaning father for a demeaning and sexually overcharged husband. But we laugh. We laugh because this is, after all, a comedy; this is, after all, Goldie Hawn.

Wendy Chapkis and Mary Wings term what happens in this movie as (in what is also the title of their essay) “ ‘The Private Benjamin Syndrome’—young and ambitious women . . . denied access to challenging employment in the private sector, courted by the armed forces in the language of women’s liberation, promised security and adventure,

they join up.”<sup>15</sup> The military, as Judy’s new surrogate husband, promises her everything she would have had with Yale: “guidance, security, good friends, healthy doses of self-confidence and a new life.” Casting the military as the protector and provider reinscribes its masculine identity, particularly because Judy, as the incapable girl, doesn’t challenge the masculine identity; rather, she adds to it. What the film says again and again is that the incapable girl acts as a sexual object and within masculine environments, particularly a military boot camp, her sexuality flourishes because she is so inept at everything else. As Cythnia Enloe argues, “Goldie Hawn was telling us cinematically that joining the military didn’t mean killing Asians or even defending democracy from the communist menace: Private Benjamin instead showed a new American way for a girl to cope with youthful widowhood, escape clinging parents and stay physically fit: go to boot camp.”<sup>16</sup>

Enloe’s suggestion that Judy “copes” gives the character too much credit. Private Benjamin actually just stumbles along. Army boot camp, as Judy experiences it, is just a series of sexualized and clownish encounters: Captain Doreen Lewis (the vengeful and bitter female training officer) gets involved with a male captain; the top recruit is found in bed with the same male captain; Private Benjamin spends her first night of survival training talking with her all female team about orgasms; Judy succeeds in the survival exercise only because she gets lost; and, she makes her first parachute jump only because of Colonel *Thornbush*’s sexual attack.

The masculine codes that define Judy’s civilian world are the same codes she encounters in the military world, only worse. Judy’s father and dead husband have counterparts in her military life: Colonel Thornbush, head of the parachute team, and Anre, her fiancé. “Colonel Thorny” accepts Private Benjamin as member of the all-male

parachute team. Her presence is not a threat to his masculine identity because he plans to protect Judy from the dangers of her first jump by raping her. As he says to Judy in the jump plane, “you don’t have to jump, there are other ways you can serve.” And when Judy leaves the Army to live with her new fiancé, Anre, she is again sexualized as a servant and dog. Despite all of her military training, it is Judy the incapable girl who mistakenly responds to Anre’s “sit” command that was meant for the dog.

Messages in this film don’t excite women about opportunities for military service, but, instead, mock the feminine as a handicap in *any* environment, particularly one saturated in military masculinity. On a personal level such messages do damage to the images of real military women. One of West Point’s first female graduates, Carol Barkalow, laments the film: “I regretted that these cartoonish characters [Private Benjamin and Captain Lewis] were the only images of military women in American popular culture that seemed to exist.”<sup>17</sup> On a political level there is more than a woman’s image at stake. Like many post-Vietnam films, *Private Benjamin* attempts to make us forget Vietnam ever happened by saying absolutely “nothing about war.”<sup>18</sup> However, the intent of this film when shown in 1998 is not to ease the now distant pain of the Vietnam War. It serves only to chain women, especially military women, to an image of incompetence better forgotten.

In 1982, *Officer and a Gentleman* reinscribed the notion of women as incapable girls, not only by excluding them from the title but by dividing Judy Benjamin’s distinctly feminine flaws between three women: civilians Paula and Lynette, who are best friends, and officer candidate Seger. These women are not as bumbling as Private Benjamin, but they remain as equally limited because they are not allowed into the

masculine military world unless men can translate that world for them.

Lynette is determined to marry one of the officer candidates, Sid, who is Zak Mayo's (Richard Gere's) best friend. As with Private Judy Benjamin, Lynette fantasizes about the travel and opportunities of military life. Her feigned pregnancy convinces Sid to propose but backfires when he withdraws from officer training. Lynette doesn't want to go to Oklahoma with him; she wants the glamour and status of an officer's wife, a naval aviator's wife. Lynette's motives are malicious, her lying deplorable, but the image of a woman needing a man to elevate her status in life is the most damaging because it's presented as every woman's need. Ironically, Sid commits suicide, not adhering to the advice he gives to Mayo about women earlier in the film, "Watch out. They're out there." A contextual shift occurs, and women and the enemy become one in the same.

Of the three women, officer candidate Seger affords the strongest image of a woman who does not need the validation of a man. Her career clearly defines her. Despite her petite stature Seger does well in the flight training. In fact, she has the potential of being the first woman to fly in combat. However, "sugar britches" (as she is called by her training sergeant, Lou Gossett) cannot make it over the obstacle course wall. A fellow officer candidate, Zak Mayo, cheers her on and with his one-on-one support Seger makes it over the wall. What makes this more than just a friendly assist is that Mayo does not help Seger until he comes to terms with his manhood, a struggle which lasts throughout the film. Only then does he offer to sacrifice his winning obstacle course time to help her. Two faulty impressions result from this scene. First, that teamwork means allowing for the weaknesses of women in a manner which will lower the overall standard of performance, and second, that males have to be supermen in order

to compensate for the demands made on them by weaker women. A woman's position, then, becomes one of obligatory indebtedness, grateful that there are such officers and gentlemen around to assist her. As long as men are available to "help," women's accomplishments remain subjugated to men's heroics.

In the film's concluding scene Ensign Mayo parades through the paper mill in his officer whites and literally carries off his girlfriend, Paula, almost as if she is some kind of graduation gift. As they leave the paper mill, Paula's cap falls off, her hair flows down, and she puts Zak's military cap on *her* head and hence shares in his military service. But as Cynthia Enloe points out, "a woman cannot become a recognized patriot on her own merits;" she may, however, "become one by becoming a patriotic mother or a patriotic wife."<sup>19</sup> Paula makes Enloe's point. The paper mill has not lost an employee; America has gained a patriotic wife. The romance of this concluding scene is inextricably linked to the notion that Paula, like Judy Benjamin, is going to be "taken care of." The capable male officer displaces independence and ability for all three women. America's man in uniform can help Lynette (by freeing her from small town life) and Paula (by marrying her). Seger also becomes a patriot by allowing the male officer to take the lead, make the sacrifice, and help women through obstacle course (of life).

### **The Capable Military Mom**

By the mid-1980s both television and film depicted stronger, more competent military women than they had previously, but these images still remained tied to traditional feminine roles and/or roles defined and controlled by men. *Star Trek the Next Generation* followed the original *Star Trek* series with a new and improved crew. The

woman on the medical staff is no longer Nurse Chapel but rather Dr. Beverly Crusher, a widow and a single mom. *Star Trek's* new woman image offers a smarter (doctor) staff officer with a powerful name, Crusher (Crush-her!) instead of the saintly nurse with the religiously charged name (Christine Chapel). Unlike Nurse Chapel, who pined away for the unrequited love of Captain Kirk, Dr Crusher is not looking for a man to complete her. Similarly, films such as *The Terminator* (1984), *Top Gun* (1986), and *Aliens* (1986) boost women's credentials (both academic and personal) to operate more successfully within a masculine military environment. These credentials, however, are not as powerful as the culturally dominant image for women, motherhood.

In *Top Gun*, the lead woman, Charlotte Blackwood, is not a mother but rather a civilian with a Ph.D. in astrophysics assigned as an instructor at the Navy's elite aviator school, and yet I include this film under the capable mom model because Charlotte is a mother of sorts to her students, the top 1% of the Navy's pilots. As a mother, even a smart one, she remains on the fringe of military opportunities, precluded from flying jets despite the fact that she knows more about aircraft capabilities than her adolescent, out-of-control students (children). The film also makes certain moves to masculinize Charlotte. She has a masculine nickname, "Charlie," and adopts manly flight attire (her wardrobe actually changes from a skirt to jeans and a leather flying jacket). Changing appearance will not, however, subvert Charlie's biology. Charlie's feminine nature only gives her access to that which can dominate her (a man), not to that which she can dominate (the jet).

Collectively, the media's images of military women I have discussed so far are sexualized nurses, incapable girls, and capable moms, and, as such, do not threaten the

masculine codes; they ensure them. One reason it is particularly difficult for military women to overcome the ubiquitous nature of masculine coding is because of the military's strong adherence to group dynamics. In a military environment, a strong sense of camaraderie and (male) rivalry glue masculine codes together. Linda Bird Francke in her recent book, *Ground Zero: The Gender Wars in the Military*, reminds us that "individuals don't count in the military. The military culture is driven by a group dynamic centered around male perceptions and sensibilities, male psychology and power, male anxieties and the affirmation of masculinity."<sup>20</sup> I believe that when this group dynamic is pitted against a military woman, who is traditionally not defined as part of the group, she compensates in one of two ways. Either the military woman allows herself to be sexualized under the guise of humor (as with "Hot Lips" Houlahan), or she takes on what Jeffords calls a "masculine point of view," defined as "a position that subsumes individual men and their differences into the larger category of masculinity as a representational construct."<sup>21</sup>

Top Gun's "Charlie" speaks from a masculine point of view during a lesson to her students when she rhetorically collapses the dialogue that describes both fighting and fucking. While maintaining fixed eye contact with Tom Cruise, "Charlie" explains in a very slow and sultry voice how the plane's "aggressive vertical move comes over the top." This highly educated, militarily savvy woman has come a long way from Nurse Chapel, but because her motherhood role is a metaphoric one, "Charlie" remains just as sexualized as "Hot Lips Houlahan," albeit in a less explicit form. In both cases, the distancing that occurs between men and women remains. If male rivalry and camaraderie function as "keep out" signs for the boys' military clubhouse, what benefits do men

derive from such exclusivity? Franke suggests in military settings the strongest connections come only between men: “The sexual payoff of the film [*TopGun*] was not between Cruise and his girlfriend, but in the [conclusion’s] clenched fist hug between the two men. Similarly, the payoff in *Independence Day* was the victory cigars shared between a Marine pilot and a computer scientist after they had destroyed an alien spaceship, not the embraces of their wives” (154). Media images code rivalry, camaraderie, and, I would add, chivalry as exclusively masculine. Similar connections between military women are minimized, trivialized, and invalidated, particularly when that military woman is a mom.

There are capable military women who actually play mothers. In *The Terminator*, and even more explicitly in *Aliens*, motherhood *precedes* the development of the movies’ central women as combatants. In *Aliens*, Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) is a chemist awakened after fifty-seven years of sleep from a mission that wiped out the rest of her crew. She rationalizes not returning to the Alien-infested planet by telling her director, “you don’t need me, I’m not a soldier.” However, Ripley does end up accompanying another crew back to the planet as an advisor, a role she accepts only with the hope of remaining safely in the background. Yet, when the team finds a little girl, it is Ripley who jeopardizes her safety by rushing forward and diving into a shaft after the fleeing child (Newt). In what the film suggests is Ripley’s natural default role, surrogate mother, Ripley sees to the little girl’s needs throughout the movie: cleaning her up, talking to her, and putting her to bed. Motherhood is paired with ability, for as the relationship between Ripley and the little girl becomes stronger, Ripley emerges as the leader of the team. Leader, in this case, is not far removed from the role of super protector, a role culturally



(automatically) connected to motherhood.

In *The Terminator* Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) makes a similar transition from mother to military leader. Connor's son, destined to save the world in the future, is hunted in the present by Terminator Arnold Schwarzenegger. In *Terminator's* sequel, Arnold Schwarzenegger returns as the child's protector from a more advanced robot, T2. The softening of Arnold's character and the hardening of Hamilton's, a topic Susan Jeffords discusses extensively in *Hard Bodies*, pivots on issues of motherhood and protection.<sup>22</sup> During *Terminator 2*, the now buff and bestial Sarah Connor essentially transfers her motherhood role to the new, kinder, more caring robot until she is no longer identifiable with her mother image at all. In order for Sarah Connor to be strong and combative she cannot be feminine, and she can no longer function as a mother.

The stereotypical mother image is wholly inconsistent with the images of women who are adept in handling weapons. Some science fiction films, such as *Aliens*, portray armed women without demanding they forgo their motherly roles. For example Ripley, unlike Sarah Connor, can comfortably wield advanced weapons while maintaining her motherly image. The film's calculated creation of a combative woman eases the tension between the seemingly incongruous images of soldier and mother. Ripley is startled the first time she holds a weapon; however, her fascination with weaponry grows when she, as a mother, has a child to protect. Protect she does. *Aliens'* concluding scene, an extended rescue of Newt, puts two combative mothers on display--mother Ripley pitted against mother Alien. Motherhood renews Ripley's confidence and her ability to handle the weapons: "Show me everything, I can handle myself." When the Alien directly threatens Newt, Ripley responds with what has become the quintessential line of the

movie, “Get away from her, you bitch.” Stronger parental skills coincide with her heightened aggressive nature. Ripley’s image regenerates throughout the film until, finally, the chemist who is “not a soldier” is draped in machine guns, rocket launchers, and grenades. Yet, despite Ripley’s regeneration, her familiarity with weapons, and her leadership abilities, Newt calls out to her “mommy” during the concluding battle with the mother Alien. Motherhood encapsulates and absorbs the image of a combative woman.

### **Technology**

Science-fiction films such as *Terminator 2* and *Aliens* successfully advance the images of women who, as mothers, are technologically adept. However, the smooth union of women and technology in a positive enduring militant image begins a larger discussion about how the military’s history and mission already reflect gendered perceptions of technology. As such, I will briefly broaden my discussion to consider the possible motivations behind the military’s gendered technological legacy. I believe gendered assumptions concerning technology construct an ideological bridge between the militant women images discussed above and images of women who, at the other end of the spectrum, are strong without weapons and without being moms.

Culturally, women can, but are not expected to, appropriate machinery that is technologically male—having grandiose size and destructive power. Consequently, how women adapt in a technologically rich environment, such as the military, greatly influences images of women soldiers. From the typically large size of the military’s battleships and B-52 bombers to the phallic forms of its jets and missiles, women’s presence creates a visual dissonance between female form and function. In the final scene of *Aliens*, Ripley is technologically male because she literally wears a giant

machine that makes her equal in physical dimension and strength to the Alien. Ripley so immerses herself in this mechanized shell that its technology completely masks the feminine. Technologically male *and* performing as a mother, she is the ultimate protector, and as such, she is not visually disruptive. In other words, the role of protector, whether performed by a man or a woman, visually lends itself to massive (masculine) technology.

Visual images formed by masculine and feminine codes are also rhetorically influenced; names create images. Naming technology and recognizing what gendered assumptions bias such naming is important to understanding the construction of women's images. The gendered nature of the naming may seem inconsistent. Battleships, for example, are named after men, but are consistently referred to as women ("she's been hit"). Historically, aircraft such as the "Memphis Belle" and Captain Charles (Chuck) E. Yeager's "Glamorous Glennis" have been named after women. Further complicating gendered images of technology is the "Enola Gay" which dropped the atomic bomb "Little Boy" on Hiroshima, Japan. Is the Enola Gay an example of technology which is feminine in name and function because the aircraft metaphorically gives birth to a male? "Fat Man," a more powerful bomb, was dropped on Nagasaki. There is, however, a pattern to the military's naming of technology. I believe that the naming process itself arises from two stereotypically gendered philosophies, the need to own and protect. Each need creates a gendered terminology that makes it more difficult to reconstruct the image of military women.

Men in combat protect their equipment in the same way that they "protect" women. It does not, however, make the technology itself feminine. Ships, planes, and individual

weapons named after women reflect a male soldier's safeguarding the weapon he should protect so it can then protect him. The extent to which a soldier can keep that machinery in his possession and functioning properly is what will determine his fate. However, protection only works one way. The equipment's feminine name does not have any agency. The name, therefore, does not suggest that a woman is protecting the male soldier, only that the soldier is protecting her to protect himself. The female-ness of the weapon is a buffer between the man and the masculine nature of war. Sarah Connor and Ripley's technologically hyped images are acceptable only in the context of a woman protecting a child, not a man. The masculine mission to protect appropriates technology coded as male, but protects it only when it is named in the feminine.

Women's images also remain excluded from technology because men eroticize the machinery in way that women do not. Stanley Rosenberg's comparison of narratives between World War II pilots and Vietnam pilots showed that as men become more strongly identified with the erotic of technology, descriptions of women subside:

In the bifurcation between combat per se and the erotic; air combat has itself become eroticized, even to the point of an acknowledgement of the arousal associated with risking death. Women fade entirely into the background of these oral histories. This is not to argue that Vietnam era pilots did not spend as much time with prostitutes between missions or that World War II pilots didn't derive stimulation from flying. However, it is immediately apparent that the pilots' culture encourages and allows a much more eroticized identification with, and immersion in, the male fraternity of fliers, a culture dominated by high-tech machines, danger, and death as its central icons.<sup>23</sup>

Rosenberg suggests that these male soldiers did not forgo women entirely, but rather considered women secondary to the thrill of a highly mechanized combat. I am taking his point one step further, suggesting that men's relationship to technology must consider the perceived gender of the technology. Men who eroticize technology that, as I believe, is already coded masculine want purely homosocial contact. Conversely, men who refashion masculine weaponry as feminine, for example, by painting sexualized women on aircrafts' noses, most likely do not.

Certainly with the development of smaller, less dramatic, and more "efficient" weaponry, there are cases where technology appears genderless. In "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" Langdon Winner stresses that "what matters is not technology itself, but the social or economic system in which it is embedded," concluding that technology can be neutral but its context profoundly sexist.<sup>24</sup> I disagree. All technology *should be* neutral, but the unique destructive nature of military technology inextricably links it to its sexist environment. It is, therefore, impossible to imagine the technology separate and distinct from its use. An army tank suggests war. Its technology is tied to one use, one (highly masculine) environment.

Technology and women acceptably mesh in only one image—a mother and her child. Culturally, because women do not transpose issues of protection and ownership directly onto the equipment, a woman's image as a technologically proficient soldier is far from the societal norm. Instead pop culture repeatedly returns audiences to very limited representations of gun-slinging women. With the exception of the technologically proficient futuristic mothers, Private Benjamin and "Charlie" are today's fallible models. Private Benjamin depicts a woman who is only exposed to fake

weapons. She has no knowledge; the mock weapons have no reality; and, together they pose no threat. *Top Gun*'s "Charlie" has the actual technological know-how but is separated from its power. As I discuss in more detail later in the section "Resistant Women," *GI Jane*'s Lieutenant O'Neil has a different relationship to technology all together. She has access to the power of the weapons without having the weapons define her as a woman. Also, as discussed in the following section, "Soldier as Woman," technology is not the single image determinant.

### **Soldier as Woman**

French feminist Luce Iriagaray argues for the repression of the mother in the woman, not as Georges Bataille and Sigmund Freud claim, the repression of the sexual woman in the mother.<sup>25</sup> If, however, men can appropriate motherhood as a social role, and women can become masculinized by technology, then it seems that another way to put pressure on this relationship is to consider the distinction of soldier/woman instead of, or at least along with, that of mother/woman. Instead of capable militant women who fight as mothers protecting their children, the new (images) of militant women fight their battles as soldiers first.

Many of the women who served in the Persian Gulf War shed their motherhood role for a soldier's one. However, public attitudes would not easily abandon the perception that mothers, not just women, were going to war. The media's Persian Gulf women were mothers leaving their children, soldiers who could be mothers, or soldiers who would never get to be mothers. Such narrow characterizations are particularly ironic, because these images undercut the intent of the policy allowing mothers to serve. The military did not allow mothers (even stepmothers) to serve until 1975; married

women could serve, but mothers were involuntarily discharged.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, while military policy was trying to afford greater service opportunities to women, media images helped limit them. Men and women soldiers' going into combat sent two very different images to the American public; heroic men who leave their homes and protect their loved ones were pitted against mothers condemned for abandoning their children.

It was only after the Persian Gulf War that television's representations of military women as *leaders first* (then as mothers or women) reflected real world occurrences. Following *Star Trek* and *Star Trek the Next Generation* came the television series *Deep Space Nine* where the highest ranking woman has now graduated from the often marginalized military medical role to second in command. And in the most recent *Star Trek* television series, *Voyager*, a woman, Captain Kathryn Janeway, is actually in command. Movies such as *A Few Good Men* (1992), *Courage Under Fire* (1996), and *G.I. Jane* (1997) followed suit, for the first time depicting strong, competent, capable *military women*.

In *Courage Under Fire*, Captain Karen Walden (Meg Ryan) is not only an Army helicopter pilot, but a pilot who actually serves in combat. Lieutenant Colonel Nathaniel Serling (Denzel Washington) runs an inquiry into whether this "girl" (whom he later refers to as "pilot" and finally as "soldier") should receive the Medal of Honor posthumously. The film plays out four different accounts of Captain Walden's leadership with each version hinging on the degree of hostility between her and a member of her crew, Sergeant Monfrez.

The fourth version is the true account of the events leading up to the Captain Walden's death, and it is in this version that the gendered rhetorical war occurs. After

Captain Walden and her crew get shot down, Sergeant Monfrez challenges her authority because he sees her crying. Captain Walden's response, "It's just tension, asshole. It doesn't mean shit," represses her feminine identity and replaces it with a soldier's. (In the stereotypical long list of male soldier don'ts, men do not cry and do not get raped.) Her words temporarily silence him. Although the crew has no immediate means of escape and is taking on heavy enemy fire, Captain Walden refuses to surrender. When Monfrez, angered by Captain Walden's NO SURRENDER dictum, calls her a "cunt," he attempts to appropriate womanhood by naming it. His verbal exposure of her obvious anatomical difference does not shake her resolve. On the contrary, as if she is upping the ante and at the same time excluding him from her team, Captain Walden retorts with motherhood as a rhetorical weapon: "I gave birth to a nine pound baby, asshole, I think I can handle it." Monfrez makes no reply. Not only has Walden disarmed his earlier "cunt" comment, but she has also inflated her femaleness, thereby excluding Monfrez from where no man has gone before. By defining war on her terms, Captain Walden is a soldier with and because of her "cunt."

My point goes beyond possessing the appropriate genitalia and the rhetorical games that subsequently ensue. Female soldiers' images are created by the attitudes women project about their roles as well as what others project onto them. In this film, the female officer deconflicts narratives of motherhood and military service. Karen Walden is a single-parent, mother to a little girl. However, *Captain* Walden's motherhood role is only a rhetorical one. She may refer to giving birth as a source of strength, but it is not what grounds her strong sense of duty. Her soldier image, one she defines by dedication and duty, remains separate from her tender motherly image. In a letter that she writes to



her parents, which they receive after her death, Karen herself expresses the dual nature of her position. She conveys how much she will miss her parents and her daughter, but Captain Walden's dying hope is that she (as soldier-woman and then mother) has served her country well.

The soldier-as-woman image is successful in *Courage Under Fire* because the construction of the feminine image is used to offset what would otherwise be an unacceptable masculine image—an aggressive woman performing well as a leader and equal to, if not better than, her male contemporaries. She may have the attitude of a soldier, but she is thoroughly recognizable as a woman. Throughout this war narrative Captain Walden keeps her femininity in tact: she's a mother, she cries, and she reinforces the stereotypical perfect woman: blonde, beautiful, intelligent, tender, wide-eyed, perfectly proportioned, and available. Her image disarms the basis for masculine resistance by being itself irresistible.

The film's narrative also constructs the feminine because a man, specifically a black one, has to usher in Captain Walden's story. Her image is not complete without a black man. His presence suggests the inherent suffering legacy for all blacks which also validates a woman's oppression; essentially the black man validates the woman's story by telling it himself. Another possibility, which places the narratives on a more equal plane, is that the pairing of two minorities is necessary to enter into a particularly white male dominant environment. The military certainly qualifies as such an environment.

In *High Contrast Race and Gender in Contemporary Hollywood Films*, Sharon Willis suggests that the image of the black male may be "structurally fundamental to the particular image of the white female hardbody."<sup>27</sup> As Willis notes, a black man makes a

brief appearance in the film *Thelma and Louise* when the women's independence is the strongest.<sup>28</sup> Her observation is particularly appropriate for military service members who, collectively, tend to be in top physical shape because they must meet certain physical demands. Another example of a female hardbody who receives the support of a black man is *GI Jane*'s Lieutenant O'Neil. During a water training exercise the fellow (black) trainee tells O'Neil that he can understand the discrimination she is experiencing because of what his grandfather went through in World War II. His grandfather served as a cook because the other soldiers thought that Negroes could not see in the dark. Black men also shadow the hardest of female bodies, women of science fiction. Typically these women, such as *Terminator 2*'s Sarah Connor, lend themselves to stronger depictions because they can readily appropriate masculine technology. Willis also claims that it is seemingly "a prerequisite of science fiction films featuring female heroes that they form alliances with a self-sacrificing African American man."<sup>29</sup> Case in point is Sarah Connor's connection to the black scientist in *Terminator 2*. In the process of destroying his robotics plant, the black man willingly sacrifices his own life.

Although *Courage Under Fire* is not science fiction and Captain Walden is not a "female hardbody," she is a strong woman whose narrative is linked to Lieutenant Colonel Serling's narrative. During his investigation of Captain Walden's eligibility for the Medal of Honor, Lt. Col. Serling assesses his own fitness as an officer because he gave an order that accidentally resulted in the death of one of his men. Woven into the accounts of Karen Walden's experiences are Nathaniel Serling's flashbacks. Their parallel narratives are united because they are both in search for the truth; however, these parallel narratives do not function in exactly the same way—they are gendered.

Luce Irigaray argues that discourse with a limited, closed and linear meaning, "speak[s] from the lofty masculine," while "a feminine language would be open, would set up multiplicities of meaning."<sup>30</sup> I rely upon her distinction as another interpretative means to understanding the unique connection between narrative and image. The direct replay of Lt. Col. Serling's narrative codes it as distinctly masculine. His flashbacks are to the same series of events that led up to the unfriendly fire accident. There is no ambiguity about what happened or his culpability in it. However, the variations in Walden's story, the "multiplicities of meaning," are indicative of a "feminine language." In *Courage Under Fire* a black man speaks for his own true account *and* for a woman's. He appropriates the feminine language in a way a woman cannot and should not use within a masculine environment. The pairing of women and black men (in images and narratives) reinforces the masculine, and as such only hampers and disrupts the images of solid women.

There is a way by which this pairing is more difficult to discern in film because of the large cast and complicated story lines. However, photographic images connect the woman and black man in a more self-evident manner. Figure 1 is a recruitment advertisement for the United States Marine Core Officer Programs.<sup>31</sup> Not only is the black man paired with the woman, but at the top left of the page his larger image is clearly dominant. In every sense he is over his female counterpart. The focus on his bust and broad shoulders reflects the traditional image of a man's chest as the prime indication of valor. Initially the woman's image is a positive one. After all, she is a pilot—not a nurse, not a clerk—and there is no indication whether or not she is a mother. Her identity is hers. Or is it? Unlike the black man, her image is a full body shot and the (masculine)

## UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS OFFICER PROGRAMS



### CHALLENGE

We want strong leaders. As an Officer of Marines, you will be just that. The Platoon Leaders Class (PLC) will challenge the limits of your mental and physical capabilities. A demanding test reveals your true character and lets you prove you have what it takes to be a leader of Marines.

### DESCRIPTION

- The Platoon Leaders Class is a summer training program that requires no interruption of your academic year, and pays approximately \$3,000 for 10 weeks of training, and provides \$150.00 per month for college tuition.
- Totally voluntary and requires no commitment until you complete college and accept your commission.
- Open to all college students carrying 12 credit hours per term, GPA 2.0 or better, combine SAT 1000, combine ACT 45, U.S. citizen, and 18-28 years of age.
- Requires no special classes, drills, or uniforms on campus; you choose academic major and college.
- Offers 28 career opportunities such as Public Relations, Finance, Law, Intelligence, Military Police, Computer Science, Air Traffic Control, and Engineering.
- Provides a starting salary of \$26,000 - \$34,000 and full benefits.
- **GUARANTEED AVIATION**  
Guarantees a seat at Flight School in Pensacola, Florida, for qualified students who desire to be a pilot.
- Will pay up to 25 hrs flight training during your senior year at any local flight school.
- **GUARANTEED LAW** for College Seniors or students currently enrolled in law school.
- Guarantees full-time employment upon successful completion of law school and passing the Bar.
- You are promoted while in Law school.

LAYER  
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### FREE INTRODUCTORY FLIGHT

If you are interested in a career as a United States Marine Corps Officer and would like to be a pilot, we are offering a free 1 hour flight with Major Mark Cicali, AH-1W Super Cobra Attack Helicopter Pilot. He will be giving introductory flights November 2, 3, and 4, to interested students or undergraduates that meet minimum requirements.

### MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- U.S. citizen
- 20/30 eye vision or better
- College student or graduate
- 18-27 years of age

There are a limited number of flights available and will fill up fast.



For more information call: Captain Dale Pugh  
1-800-967-8762 ext. 1340  
E-mail: M003333@6m.net



Figure1 Recruitment Advertisement

technology of the aircraft is completely visible. She appears small and vulnerable in a way that the black pilot does not. The woman is also the one with her legs spread in what is not a military stance. Spreading her legs exposes her. Consequently, the fact that both images contain flight suits hardly makes them equal. This is only one advertisement, but its more visual image is the same pairing audiences encounter on the screen and the message is the same. Strong, independent women who hope to enter a highly charged masculine environment like the military need help from black men who carry their own stories of oppression.

### **The Resistant Woman**

Strong women are not new to film. From *Star Wars*' Princess Leia to Thelma and Louise, the independent and aggressive nature of women has grown. What is new, however, is that some of these women are strong without husbands, children, or technology. G.I. Jane and the women in *Paradise Road* are examples of the late 90s resistant women who are not reworked into American masculine lore by falling in love or dying. G.I. Jane resists on an individual level and the women in *Paradise Road* on a collective one. Together, these films challenge the notion that "good things are manly and collective . . . [t]he despicable are feminine and individual."<sup>32</sup> When the women in these films disrupt and invert gendered notions of acceptable conduct, they open up ideological paths of resistance for all women.

In *G.I. Jane*, Lieutenant O'Neil (Demi Moore) is an astute intelligence officer who becomes the test case for women to serve in combat, in this case, the Navy's elite reconnaissance team--the SEALs. The film raises issues such as different physical standards, bathroom facilities, sleeping quarters, OB/GYN needs, lesbianism, and even

hair length. To men who have problems with these issues, Demi Moore snaps, "get over yourself." However, all the men in the film are slow to accept her until she proves herself in the simulated Prisoner of War compound. The precise moment in which Lieutenant O'Neil earns full credibility is following an attempted rape by her training sergeant (as part of the survival training). She avoids being raped, fights with the sergeant, and, when she has the upper hand, tells him to "suck my dick."<sup>33</sup>

Moore's line is, of course, explicitly sexually charged, but this doesn't make it inherently powerful. Had she said called the sergeant a "dick," or had she said "fuck you," it would not have had the same effect. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey says that "Ultimately, the meaning of woman is sexual difference, the visually ascertainable absence of the penis, the material evidence on which is based the castration complex essential for the organisation [sic] of entrance to the symbolic order and the law of the father."<sup>34</sup> But in her distinction Mulvey assumes "a silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning" and "as bearer of the bleeding wound; she can exist only in relation to castration not transcend it."<sup>35</sup> Yet, Demi Moore breaks the silence, gives meaning, and does transcend the castration because she resists being defined by what she does not have. Moore speaks as a woman aware of lack, not a soldier for whom sexuality is supposedly irrelevant.

The uncomfortable nature of so many other *GI Jane*'s scenes exposes a very real gendered tension for military women—how to be accepted in a masculine environment without having to compromise femininity. The image of a bald woman, a scarred woman, a woman hardened but not masculinized or laden with technology, scares men who equate *masculine* sex appeal (the handsome, macho, recruiting poster image) with

military skill. Consequently, the images of Ripley in *Aliens* and Sarah Connor (as she appeared in her sequel *Terminator II: Judgment Day* (1991)) are much more acceptable to men than those of Lieutenant O'Neil. All three women are in incredible physical condition, all three women are equally intelligent and resourceful, but Demi Moore manages to stay feminine because her body, free from (masculine) technology, remains the focus. In fact, so removed is Lieutenant O'Neil from massive firepower that in the only scene where she could potentially kill someone, the situation demands a silent weapon, a knife. Her appearance incrementally changes, but she hasn't transferred her femininity nor has she been depleted of it. G.I. Jane shaves her head, and she has bruises, but her boyfriend still makes loves to her. Her gender is not contaminated nor technologically supplemented in a way which comprises her own power.

Glenn Close and co-star Julianna Margulies are two of the resistant women in a lesser-known film, *Paradise Road*. Based on a true story, American and English soldier's wives as well as Australian nurses flee Singapore during military unrest. On their voyage home, the Japanese capture them. During their three plus years in captivity, Adrianna (Glenn Close) covertly organizes a vocal orchestra, initially for morale and later as a means of resistance. The singing heroines of *Paradise Road* are similar to *G.I. Jane*'s Lieutenant O'Neil, but for the fact that theirs is a collective resistance and not an individual one. For this, and other reasons, which will become evident in my discussion, *Paradise Road* is a particularly important film for understanding what I believe to be pop culture's most positive female images--resistant women.

Images of resistant women are most successful when they undo suffocating masculine codes while holding on to feminine ones. Appropriating masculine codes only

proves that women can act like men and from that mark women will, biologically, always fall short. A stronger position is to disrupt the masculine codes themselves with women who are not the exception but the expectation. Even before they are prisoners, the women in *Paradise Road* disrupt masculine codes. Their subsequent imprisonment is, metaphorically, less about a battle with the Japanese and more about undoing masculine constructions of war. How the women in this film endure the familiar tension between behavior and image and what gendered codes they choose to follow (or not follow) construct resistance *a la femme*.

The women's attitudes are "disturbing" from the start. The film opens with women already resisting gendered cultural codes and inverting them without taking on masculine appearances. Rosemarie tells her dance partner (husband) that he is "beautiful," to which he replies, "you can't say that can you? Men aren't, [sic] I am not beautiful." Adrianna and "Topsy" (Julianna Margulies) debunk their men's characterizations of the Japanese as being "cross-eyed," having "useless weapons," and not being able to "see at night." They remind the men that the Japanese have conquered most of Asia and have successfully attacked Pearl Harbor. These educated, cultured, and upper-crust women are also strong, independent thinkers who subsequently transform their independent minds into a collective feminine resistance as prisoners of war.

The ability to resist *as women* is borne among them and reverberates throughout the camp. Women prisoners, playing out traditionally feminine domestic duties, such as preparing food and cleaning, urinate in the water pails that the Japanese soldiers drink from. In one particularly graphic scene, protecting the traditionally feminine caretaker duty turns deadly. A women prisoner caught trading medicine with partisans is covered



with gas and set aflame before the other prisoners. Resistance comes too in the image of the feminine devout. A Dutch nun, who is highly trusted by the Japanese because of her vocation, resists by lying. Her lie persuades the camp commander to spare Adrianna's life. Other untraditional behavior from the nun includes starting a stalled truck when the Japanese soldiers cannot, and reminding the others that she always wanted to be an engineer, but her father wanted her to be a nun.

Similar displays of resistance might merely be categorized as indicative of prison life and not stemming from any particular gender code. However, the nature of women's singing and the resistance imbedded in this characteristically feminine talent suggest otherwise. Glenn Close, in organizing and leading the vocal orchestra, defines herself as the first-ever female conductor. The singing, highly atypical of male prisoners, unites these women and provides the greatest form of resistance. Eventually, the orchestra reaches a point when it can no longer continue because so many of the singers have died. Japanese commanders subsequently mock the end of the "heroic" singing. Adrianna's (Glenn Close's) reaction to her captors mirrors the defining scene in *GI Jane*. She picks up some stones and rhythmically taps them to mock her mockers. All of the remaining women prisoners join in.

The image of the resistant woman is visual as well as behavioral. Most of the women interred in the camp do not fit the traditional image of the faltering, helpless woman. Instead, they find ways to mute aspects of their femininity for a stronger image of resistance. There are two exceptions: Rosemarie, who never loses her highly feminized nature, and the woman doctor, who never has a feminine nature to begin with. Rosemarie dies early on of a broken heart; while, the doctor, visually and behaviorally

draped in masculine codes, survives without singing. The doctor represents the stereotypical masculinized female; however, this does not make her a resistant woman. Her image, like Rosemarie's, remains outside of the resistant collective--the vocal orchestra.

By defining a femininity, which does not require sex appeal, motherhood, or masculine technology to succeed, Demi Moore and the women in *Paradise Road* resist gender codes. Yet, the cultural expectation is for them to resist only on one level--sexual. Lieutenant O'Neil fends off her attempted rape, but that particular scene remains the highpoint of the film. Early in *Paradise Road* (before the women are captured) one woman says she's heard of the sexual horror women experience from their Japanese captors. Yet, Adrianna (Glenn Close) fends off an attack by a drunken Japanese soldier which is portrayed as an embarrassing anomaly, not the rule. Still, the rape expectation shadows the rest of the film, especially in a subsequent scene when Adrianna is taken out into the woods by the head camp guard. She's not raped; instead, the guard sings to her with the hopes of getting her professional assessment of his talent.

These images do not suggest that women are rape proof in combat, but that they are not *always* raped. Stereotypical soldier images suggest that male prisoners of war can be tortured and starved, but only women are subject to sexual assault. In *Prisoners of War*, Elliott Gruner comments on the inequity of this expectation:

Most certainly male POWs as well as women POWs have been molested or raped in captivity, but the overwhelming assumption of POW stories is that captivity is somehow asexual (or pleasurably sexual as in pornography) for the male and explicitly sexual (and disqualifying) for the female.<sup>36</sup>

Essentially, a woman is so defined by American (military) culture in terms of her sexuality that this is *her* vulnerability in war. How easy it is to forget who is doing the defining.

I am limiting the discussion at this point to how sexual ideology is culturally set in a military environment and its subsequent effect on the images of military women. The inordinate level of sexual hype fostered in military training scenarios perpetuates (in men) that which is most feared (for women by men). Ironically, the sexual violations so often anticipated by the "enemy" are homegrown. Some are taught on military campuses. Among her list of traditions at military academies, Carol Burke cites a variety of practices specifically focusing on male genitalia. In the 1970s at Kingston, Canada's Royal Military College the upper-class played love songs to naked men in the hallways. The first to achieve an erection could go back to his room.<sup>37</sup> In another practice called "woofering," a vacuum cleaner is applied to the genitals while the cadet is handcuffed and headcovered. Burke suggests that boys "symbolically die[d]" in this kind of pain and "can be reborn into the world of men."<sup>38</sup> Despite the termination of such hazing practices, the ideological expectation that virility, manhood, and warrior are all synonymous continually works against positive images of women soldiers.

*GI Jane* and *Paradise Road* did not approach the success of Stephen Spielberg's blockbuster hit, *Saving Private Ryan*. In that World War II film, Army Captain John Miller (Tom Hanks) leads a small cadre of men to find one soldier, Private Ryan (Matt Damon). Since Ryan's three brothers were killed in battle, the young paratrooper, as the only surviving son, gets to go home. The film's first twenty minutes, a beach-storming scene, is a horrifically graphic blood bath from the barrage of machine gun fire and

explosions to the shell-shocked soldier who searches the beach for his missing arm and finds it. Although the soldiers are shell-shocked, scared, and exhausted, they dutifully press on. Unlike other popular war films such as *Platoon* and *Apocalypse Now*, there really are no Ramboesque, macho, or robotic men in *Saving Private Ryan* to mark this Steven Spielberg film as particularly masculine.

Without hyper masculinity to critique, this film initially may seem hardly worthy of feminist comment. Absent are images of raped girls or women prostitutes, by-products of wars that previously have borne feminist critique. The film also does not portray powerful women storming beaches of Normandy (less their body parts), nor should it. However, *Saving Private Ryan* is important to the construction of women's images because it successfully trumps the images of resistant women (*GI Jane* and *Paradise Road*) by introducing shadows of much more familiar images—unprotected women. Spielberg's mastery is being able to reconstruct gendered protection myths without even having to have women present, at least not for long. The first of these fleeting "protect me" images is Private Ryan's mother.

Mrs. Ryan, the central woman in the film, is silent and non-descript (the camera shoots her with her back to the audience). Audiences first see her profile while she is washing dishes and looking out her kitchen window at an approaching vehicle. The next image of her is also from behind, a silhouette of her body framed by, and in the light of, the front doorway as she awaits her visitor. When a military officer steps out of the car, Mrs. Ryan slowly drops to her knees. Her identity, the mother of three sons who have been killed, is completely defined by this her only moment. Although Mrs. Ryan's loss is the catalyst for the entire story, her image disappears into visual anonymity.

During the moment that she learns of her sons' deaths, the audio overlay is that of an Army commander reading his words of condolence. The commanding officer quotes Abraham Lincoln, a distinctly mythic American voice, whose words ease this mother's pain in the same way that they eased the slaves. Lincoln's historical narrative is now recycled for this grieving mother. Once again media unites the images of women and blacks, even though, in this case, the black presence is a memory. However, this pairing does not have the same outcome as it did with previous pairings with resistant women such as *GI Jane*'s Lieutenant O'Neil or *Courage Under Fire*'s Captain Walden. Unlike these resistant women whose lives mesh with black narratives, and, as a result, emerge stronger, acknowledged, and respected, Mrs. Ryan evokes empathy. When she drops to her knees, her visual anonymity makes her everyone's mother to be pitied. Because Mrs. Ryan's loss is essentially the film's war story, Americans are reminded that they are fighting, not only for her, but also for *all* mothers and *protecting* them from similar losses. Issues and political agendas roll over to one "true" myth--war is primarily about protecting women.

Other images of women in *Saving Private Ryan* also diminish and warp gendered expectations of women in war. Civilian women clerks remain marginalized from the war effort. Early in the film, a large (female) secretarial pool types letters of condolence for the signature of their (male) commanders. Among the hundreds or thousands of letters these women send out, one clerk recalls sending three letters of condolence to the Ryan family's address. As soon as she brings this fact to the attention of her superiors, she fades from the picture. Considering that, at the time, female war clerks were not even allowed to fight, it may seem odd to belabor their marginalization in this film. However, I

am not suggesting they be war heroes. What is central is that these stereotypical feminized images are usually cast on war's periphery either as invisible or incapable. As evident in this film, sometimes a man, in this case Corporal Upham, fulfills the image of the feminized clerk.

*Saving Private Ryan's* Corporal Upham is small in stature, fluent in German, and a skilled typist. He is a last-minute transfer to Captain Miller's squad from the administrative section. As with *M.A.S.H's* Radar O'Rielley, this feminized clerk-image is inconsistent with fighting, alien to war. However, unlike Radar, Upham is not just a misfit or another scared soldier; Upham is the only soldier in this film whose cowardice costs another man his life. In *Saving Private Ryan's* final dramatic scene, Upham's job is to supply the ammunition to the scattered members of his squad—a position clearly set apart from the other soldiers. He has, in fact, not fired a weapon since basic training. When strapped with massive firepower (in his role as ammo-boy) Upham's small frame is unusually weighted down. Soon into the siege, he hears one of his squad mates being attacked. Instead of helping him, Upham cowers nearby, while tearfully listening to his friend being killed. Once he finally recovers from his fears, Upham now effortlessly carries the ammunition and kills enemy soldiers. Upham cannot die a (womanly) coward; he has to be reborn into manhood. The story behind his earlier feminized image is the same—all that should be excluded from war is feminine, not masculine.

The second deadly female is actually a little girl whom a soldier in Captain Miller's squad tries to save, despite warnings that transporting civilians (even children) is not the squad's primary mission. An enemy sniper kills the American soldier. The unstated narrative is that if the soldier hadn't tried to save the little girl, he'd be alive, or at least

have a better chance at life. Certainly, the soldier's death is not the little girl's fault, but it is over *her* image not the other child's (a little boy), that the soldier loses his life. Innocence and protection are so tightly woven into this brief encounter that the message is two-fold: men will die to protect America just as they *should* die to protect all unprotected women.

In the final image, Captain Miller tells his men that his motivation for finding Private Ryan is to get home to his wife. He does not refer to her by name (making his wife as generic a woman as Private Ryan's mother). After he finds Ryan, Captain Miller gets killed as well, leaving a wife a back home. Miller's "wife" is a one-word, rhetorically constructed image built on nothing but an audience's collective memory of what his wife should be. Mrs. Miller is anyone's and everyone's grieving wife whom "we" try to protect. The nameless wife is the last of this film's fleeting images of silent, non-descript, and diminished women. Along with images of clerks, faceless mothers and (deadly) little girls, *Saving Private Ryan* keeps the image of woman "still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning."<sup>39</sup>

The feminine shadows that appear in *Saving Private Ryan* speak to the larger issue of not only remembering what is factually accurate but also remembering the memories' gendered coding as a way to inform present moments. In this respect, pop cultural war images are particularly powerful because they bridge disruptions and fill gaps between the perceptions and realities of war. More Americans will see *Saving Private Ryan* than will fight in a war. As much as audiences are repelled by the atrocities in the opening scene, they are also drawn to them—not because they love violence, but because they temporarily *experience* the war. Miriam Cooke describes a similar psychological

dynamic at work when viewing war photography: "you feel that you know what it must have been like because you know what it looked like. You can approximate this war as your own, talk about it with the authority of experience, even though what you experienced was a perception of a fragment of what the photographer framed."<sup>40</sup> The power of "knowing what it must have been like" restores a piece of America's war fighting myth which has been gone but not forgotten and this, unfortunately, includes the gender biases imbedded in the "knowing."

The reconstruction of events in *Saving Private Ryan* is about more than accurately re-creating Normandy's beach invasions. Representations in this film draw on audience's gendered memories and reinforce not only the historical events but also the gendered premises of war as truth. I call these kinds of memories reflexive myths—myths that easily trigger deeply held notions of a *gendered* American identity with only shadows of traditionally held gendered roles. The story that soldiers fought on the beaches of Normandy is fact, but another gendered story is also renewed. War accounts transfer other powerful stories of "protecting the little woman at home" to today. It is impossible not to consider protecting something, even someone. After all, protection is imbedded in the very experience of war—protection of rights, land, resources, and people—but Captain Miller's death protects and ensures the American myth more than himself or his men.

The final scene is the best reinforcement of this gendered American myth. At that moment, knowing he is going to die, Captain Miller tells Private Ryan to "earn this." Now an old man, Mr. Ryan questions the meaning of his life at Captain Miller's gravesite. In fact, the very act of Mr. Ryan remembering frames the entire film. The camera shot moves to the image of Ryan's family. As his wife steps forward, Mr. Ryan



asks her, "Have I been a good man?" The question should have been, "Have I been a good *family* man?" because it is clear by this point that Ryan's family is the evidence for making his life count and being worthy of Miller's sacrifice. Of course, families do count; they have value. But why must the image of Ryan at Miller's gravesite revere the family only in terms of how well *men* can protect them? Because of this very masculine reflexive myth and the deep impressions set by fleeting by images of women, I believe, *Saving Private Ryan* escapes an on-going volley between perception and reality; it moves from perception to reality and then back to a *reinforced* gendered perception which subjugates women.

### Conclusion

Images of military and militant women have their own story. My intent in this chapter has been to trace the evolution of those images from 1980 to today by way of the following representations: sexualized nurse, the incapable girl, the capable mom, soldier as woman, and the resistant woman. Certainly, we are a long way from commissioning GI Janes. Yet, as these images of military women continue to change, awareness of their sublimating narrative power is crucial. As Rick Berg discusses in an essay about the images of Vietnam: "Our fidelity to certain pictures and certain modes of picturing underwrite what we know as well as *how* we know."<sup>41</sup> Each of these women's images within their narrative context constructs a part of our national memory—a memory that needs our revisiting for the legacy of military.

## Notes to Chapter III

<sup>1</sup> Klaus Theweleit, "The Bomb's Womb and the Genders of War," *Gendering War Talk*, eds. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993) 311.

<sup>2</sup> Theweleit 311.

<sup>3</sup> Theweleit 307.

<sup>4</sup> Theweleit 308.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

<sup>6</sup> For others who characterize women's roles in war see the following: Cynthia Enloe in *Does Khaki Become You?* groups women's roles functionally by camp followers, prostitutes, wives, nurses, and soldiers. Elliott Gruner in *Prisoners of Culture* discusses another popular image, women as betrayers. Klaus Theweleit in "The Bomb's Womb" comments on the images of women as torturers and as liberators.

<sup>7</sup> When it comes to remembering *Star Trek* women, many viewers also recall the communications officer, Lieutenant Uhura. I do not consider her more visible position on the crew as a significant advance for women because her role is well coded as feminine—that of a switchboard operator. See Nira Yuval-Davis, "Sexual Division of Labour Minorities," *Loaded Questions Women in the Military*, ed. W. Chapkis (Washington DC: Transnational Institute, n.d.) 33. As she observes, "The most common functions women fulfill in militaries are clerical and administrative—that is, maintaining the bureaucratic structure of the army. Other common roles are in nursing, communications and other servicing positions." Certainly Lt. Uhura's popularity offers

an opportunity for further discussion about how race and class (as a black woman with an Irish name) complicate her presence.

<sup>8</sup> See Susan Jeffords' "Women, Gender, and the War" *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 6 Mar 89 for an extensive listing of women's' Vietnam War narratives.

<sup>9</sup> C. L. Mithers, "Missing in action: Women, warriors, and Vietnam." *The Vietnam War and American Culture*, eds. John Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 81.

<sup>10</sup> "Bring Me Men," part of a Sir Walter Foss poem, hangs over the Air Force Academy's primary entrance and, as such, is one of the many issues upon which the institution flags itself as a theoretical test-bed for gender studies. See Judith Hicks Stiehm's *Bring Me Men and Women: Mandated Change at the U.S. Air Force Academy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

<sup>11</sup> Connie Reeves, "The Military Women's Vanguard: Nurses," *It's Our Military Too! Women and the U.S. Military Academy*, ed. Judith Hicks Stiehm (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996) 111.

<sup>12</sup> Reeves 100.

<sup>13</sup> Reeves 109.

<sup>14</sup> Linda Bird Francke, *Ground Zero The Gender Wars in the Military* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997) 25.

<sup>15</sup> Wendy Chapkis and Mary Wings, "The Private Benjamin Syndrome," *Loaded Questions Women in the Military*, ed. W. Chapkis (Washington DC: Transnational Institute, n.d.) 21.

<sup>16</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives*

(London; Pandora Press) xvi.

<sup>17</sup> Carol Barkalow, *In the Men's House* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1990) 144.

<sup>18</sup> Chapkis 18.

<sup>19</sup> Enloe 220.

<sup>20</sup> Francke 150.

<sup>21</sup> Susan Jeffords, "Tattoos, Scars, Diaries, and Writing Masculinity," *The Vietnam War and American Culture*, eds. John Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 216.

<sup>22</sup> Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994) 156-177.

<sup>23</sup> Stanley D. Rosenberg, "The Threshold of Thrill: Life Stories in the Skies over Southeast Asia," *Gendering War Talk*, eds. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993) 59.

<sup>24</sup> Langdon Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" *The Social Shaping of Technology*, eds. Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1985) 26.

<sup>25</sup> Jeffords, *Remasculinization* 113.

<sup>26</sup> Francke 136.

<sup>27</sup> Sharon Willis, *High Contrast. Race and Gender in Contemporary Hollywood Film* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) 21.

<sup>28</sup> Willis 125.

<sup>29</sup> Willis 125.

<sup>30</sup> Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures Feminism and Cinema* (Boston: Routledge &

Kegan Paul, 1982) 65.

<sup>31</sup> *The Daily of the University of Washington* [Seattle] 28 Sep. 98: 24.

<sup>32</sup> George Gilder, *Men and Marriage* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Co, 1986) 183.

<sup>33</sup> In what has proven to be a controversial film for feminists, *Thelma and Louise*, Willis notes that Louise kills Thelma's attacker not during the attack, but after Thelma is safe and the attacker says "Suck my cock!" See Willis 105.

<sup>34</sup> Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, eds. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (New York: Longman, 1994) 427.

<sup>35</sup> Mulvey 422.

<sup>36</sup> Elliott Gruner, *Prisoners of Culture* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993) 188.

<sup>37</sup> Carol Burke, "Pernicious Cohesion," *It's Our Military Too! Women and the U.S. Military Academy*, ed. Judith Hicks Stiehm (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996) 214.

<sup>38</sup> Burke 214-215.

<sup>39</sup> Mulvey 422.

<sup>40</sup> Miriam Cooke, "Subverting Gender and Military Paradigms," *It's Our Military Too! Women and the U.S. Military Academy*, ed. Judith Hicks Stiehm (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996) 254.

<sup>41</sup> Rick Berg, "Losing Vietnam: Covering the War in an Age of Technology," *The Vietnam War and American Culture*, eds. John Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 127.

### Chapter IV: Our Father in Uniform

--"There are no atheists in my outfit! Atheism is  
against the law, isn't it? . . . . it's unAmerican"

*Catch-22's* Colonel Cathcart

In 1979, during Congressional hearings concerning the repeal of the combat exclusion provisions, "the director of the Moral Majority testified that 'women in combat roles violates the order of creation, [the] will of God.'"<sup>1</sup> As recently as the summer of 1995, "a board of Naval captains recommended the discharge of a lieutenant commander who led a helicopter detachment but declared that his religious views (Episcopalian) prevented him from leading women in combat."<sup>2</sup> Such testimonies override the rote explanations typically given for women not serving in the military (such as physical weakness or motherhood) and, instead, seek to bar women from military service solely on the basis of masculine religious ideology. However, unlike rote explanations, which tend to be supported by quantitative measurements of gender difference, religious contentions are by their very nature driven by indeterminate beliefs, not statistical bottom lines. In other words, military women can refute exclusionary practice when their "measured" performance is commensurate with men's and, more importantly, gets the job done. But, how do military women contest religiously based exclusions whose ideological assumptions subjugate their very existence independent of measured performance or, in the case of motherhood, job availability? Despite the separation of church and state, the military's strong religious underside trumps its religiously neutral exterior, thereby promoting a discourse that excludes the discursive formation of military women as leaders. So powerful is religion's discursive influence that within military culture it is

understood as “normative” or adopted to the point of expectation. However, unlike the military’s other norms (male and heterosexual), religion is far less likely to be challenged as a basis for excluding women. Military personnel are so “naturalized” (in Althusser’s terms) by the religious ideology out of which they are formed (and which continues to form them) that their thinking concerning the armed forces automatically assumes religion as a given. For military women, religious ideology, then, proves a particularly formidable foe precisely because it does not appear to be one.

This chapter is different from my others because I begin, not end, with a position about one of the military’s stereotypical norms, religion, which I then demonstrate at length via a series of military narratives. The rationale for this strategy is that the prevalence of religiously charged narratives, which literally flourish in a military culture that officially discounts them, has gendered implications. First, I argue that by keeping religious tenets as part of its ideological base, the Air Force’s gendered payoff is that the presence of women is understood to be inconsistent with flying, a mission which is equated with the ultimate service to God. The types of military narratives supporting my point are outlined below. Second, I argue that the military’s unofficial religious endorsement finds its way into national discourses, so much so that religion is blatantly conflated with patriotism and, as a result, these military narratives discursively preclude women from another kind of service, citizenship. This chapter is also different because unlike the discursive sites discussed in my previous chapters (undergraduate canons, auto/biography, and film), religious ideology is situated in a far more historical context.

I begin, then, by identifying Rousseau’s social contract theory, specifically his concept of “civil religion” as the appropriate underpinning for Air Force narratives.

Although the tenets of his concept prove, at times, inconsistent, Rousseau's legacy of "civil religion" remains the basis for the United States' national discourse, a discourse that equates "American" identity with defending the nation. Specifically, the Air Force's military discourse appropriates what I believe are the primary tenets of Rousseau's "civil religion," sacredness and control, to shape attitudes about gender. How this control limits women's military service motivates this Chapter. I believe that service members' rigid adherence to patriarchal religious dogma excludes women, while it simultaneously prefigures other characteristics crucial to service such as patriotism, duty, and obedience. Therefore, the power of the military's unofficial cultural narratives and acts cultivates in its soldiers a religious allegiance to the military and the state that undermines and dismisses women's leadership potential.

In Part Two of this Chapter, "Sculpting Saints," I draw examples of such religiously-charged military discourse from the United States Air Force Academy (USFA), considered by many to be the elite training ground and commissioning source for the Air Force's future officers. In many ways, the training at the Air Force Academy with its rules, regimen, and cloistered locale mirrors a monastic order. Yet, officially, the armed forces hold a politically correct stance and remain religiously neutral. For example, Air Force bases generically identify their places of worship as "Chapel One" and "Chapel Two." However, unofficially, religious narratives prove essential to the discursive formation of an officer. The Air Force Hymn, John Gillespie Magee Jr's poem "High Flight," and POW experiences, as well as other religiously-charged narratives, overshadow military training practices because, I believe, they instill a strong sense of duty—more directly, obedience. This unofficial religious legacy not only constructs an



obedient military mind, but it designs one markedly absent of women. Also, it is worth noting that the Air Force Academy, as the newest of the military institutions, has the fewest years of masculine tradition to overcome; therefore my critique of discursive formations which exclude women represents, militarily speaking, best case scenarios.

In Part Three of this Chapter I examine the presence of religious legacy in national military discourses such as POW narratives and General Colin Powell's memoir *My American Journey*. These narratives, echoing those more particular to military training, possess varying degrees of religious subtlety; however, unlike the others, as national narratives, these examples move the cultural and religious cues housed within the Air Force Academy to society at large. In a larger context, issues of women's military inclusion/exclusion raise the broader concern of how women are constructed not as military officers but as citizens.

### **Part One: Rousseau's Legacy of Civil Religion**

As with other terms that often lose their historical significance or are misappropriated over time, Rousseau's "civil religion" is no exception. As a result, contemporary critics have a common misconception that by advocating civil religion Rousseau wanted a society steeped in religious dogma. This view is not without merit, but, as I will show, is complicated by a closer reading of Rousseau's text, *On the Social Contract or Principles of Political Right*. In the discussion that follows, I quote Rousseau rather extensively because a close reading of his language unearths meanings previously buried by decades of misuse. Returning to the text is necessary to rethink civil religion in terms of its original conception and not as the convenient, malleable phrase it has become to American discourse.

The first two dogmas of Rousseau's "civil religion" acknowledge "[t]he existence of a powerful, intelligent, beneficent, foresighted, and providential divinity" and construct "the afterlife."<sup>3</sup> Rousseau's privileging of an omnipotent being and the expectation of an afterlife depict both the ultimate social authority and, because of the presumed afterlife, an incentive to "be good." As a means of social control, such a powerful divinity dwarfs the power of any single individual and, by default, unites those who are subject to God's power. The unique combination of reverence and fear calls for religiously specific words such as "sacrifice," "sacred," and "sanctity," terms rarely evoked outside of a "holy" pretext. Acknowledging the sanctity of God is, indeed, crucial to Rousseau's theory because, as Hilail Gildin suggests, "the social order cannot be relied on to do what it is meant to do unless it is held to be sacred . . . self-preservation may supply political society with its purpose, [but] it cannot make political society sacred. Civil religion is necessary for that end."<sup>4</sup> For Rousseau, then, civil religion unifies a set of laws--laws that will protect the state. The sanctity of civil religion requires a high degree of both civil and theological tolerance (concepts Rousseau conflates): "It is impossible to live in peace with people whom one believes are damned. To love them would be to hate God who punishes them."<sup>5</sup> Once again, Rousseau exalts a God who has power, including disciplinary power, over the mores of society, and he ensures the protection of the state by focusing on one and only "sacred" being--God.

However, what often remains unexamined is the practicality of Rousseau's *On the Social Contract*. While the sacredness of a civil religion is clearly important to him, his interests are more invested in other dogmas that have far less to do with God: "the happiness of the just; the punishment of the wicked; the sanctity of the social contract

laws.”<sup>6</sup> Rousseau’s interest in societal religion is primarily its use as a mechanism for control. The control, based on a contractual relationship, is replete with consequences. Citizens abide by this kind of contract to achieve social order, not necessarily to worship a just and loving God. Faith, then, when conceived of as a baseline, a prerequisite to citizenship, is only relevant to the state when it pertains to morality or duty to others.<sup>7</sup> Yet, even this gesture to morality and duty does not mean that Rousseau advocates any specific religious denomination. In fact, he is particularly critical of Christianity, claiming that “a society of true Christians would no longer be a society of men.”<sup>8</sup> And in a statement that casts Rousseau as a statesman, not a theologian, he chastises religion for many of the same qualities he expects in a social order: “Christianity preaches nothing but servitude and dependence.”<sup>9</sup>

Diane Fourny acknowledges the contradiction in Rousseau’s argument:

At one point he will assert categorically that religion resides at the very center of the social pact. At the same time, he will also categorically insist upon the exclusion of certain religious forms (in particular Christianity) from the social pact. The double play of inclusion and expulsion of the sacred dimension points to one of the more curious and obscure functions of religion: the mechanism of scapegoating.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, as she goes on to claim, we can never know if Rousseau did this consciously. Although he is not writing in response to Fourny, Hilail Gildin’s observations about the specificity in which Rousseau assigns sanctity indirectly offers one plausible explanation for Rousseau’s contradiction. Gildin points out that Rousseau attributes “sanctity” to the social contract and to the laws, but he does not attribute it to the sovereign, and he argues

that this inequity (or inclusion/exclusion) actually has a positive consequence--to maintain the laws: "The effect of this higher dignity is not to diminish the legitimate authority of the sovereign but to prevent the people from violating the laws it has not repealed."<sup>11</sup> Rousseau's privileging the sanctity of the body politic over the power of the sovereign clearly establishes law and control as essential elements of a successful society. (These elements are, of course, also fundamental to the military.) Because Rousseau views Christianity as a competing, albeit religious, *sovereignty*, he does not tolerate it in his conception of the social contract. His hostile exclusion of Christianity is eased somewhat by his own religious neutrality (non-denominational). Paradoxically, Rousseau's neutrality fosters a very narrow definition of social order, while encouraging the broadest scope of participation.

So far, I have discussed the tension and ambiguity within Rousseau's concept of civil religion, specifically how sacredness serves as a guise for control. Rousseau's vested interest in control is not self-serving, but rather is intended to promote social order for the good of the community. Indeed, Rousseau's concern with the community's welfare over and above that of the individual is communicated directly: "Everything that destroys social unity is worthless. All institutions that put man in contradiction with himself are worthless."<sup>12</sup> Citizens ideally more readily submit to the idea of control when convinced to believe in communities, the building blocks of states. In Rousseau's conception, communities and religion are self-sustaining and, more importantly, grounds for social order. Over time, America's historical churning of Rousseau's tenets may have diminished their religious presence within society at large, but they have secured a place within military discourse. Rousseau's claim that: "a State has never been founded

without religion serving as its base" is not intended to strengthen the moral core of individuals--it is to get them to accept a social contract.<sup>13</sup>

Let me briefly outline some of the contemporary cultural practices and expectations inherited from Rousseau's tenets that link, first, religion with citizenship and, then, religion with military citizenship. Over time, the readily conflated words and deeds of national discourse have allowed religiously discursive formations, particularly within the military, to go unchallenged. Robert N. Bellah claims that the infusion of religion into American society was so overt, yet, simultaneously subtle, in its selection that most Americans never noticed the difference.<sup>14</sup> His observation grounds itself in Americans' daily lives. As citizens, we routinely pledge allegiance to "one nation under God"; we swear to tell the truth and to uphold the rigors of public office "so help [us] God"; and our currency's inscription is to trust in God. Of course, not every citizen pledges or swears an oath, but my point is that the rhetorical presence, not absence, of God is the nation's norm. Simple gestures of citizen affirmation become more performative events during America's national holidays and, discursively, many of these holidays also have religious connotations. The Fourth of July, for example, celebrates the Declaration of Independence which allows for "one people . . . to assume among the powers of earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of Nature's *God* entitle them" (my emphasis). Memorial Day also strengthens the military's religious presence in a national forum. Whether it be a community's local parade or the Air Force Academy's solemn roll call for deceased graduates, remembering and the performance of this remembering discursively bridge the military's propensity for religiosity with the nation's strong, but silent expectation for the same. In the following section, I discuss how this

religious expectation also includes martyr making, which serves and preserves the military's social order as masculine.

### **Part Two: Sculpting Saints**

Nowhere is the need to have members embrace social contract narratives greater than in the military where people are called upon to subvert their individuality, follow orders of those they may or may not respect, and defend national decisions that may cost them their lives. Yet, no official Air Force narratives (regulations, policy letters, or directives) equate the military with God. In fact, religion is officially absent in many Air Force narratives. For example, the Air Force personnel web-page<sup>15</sup> provides demographics on active duty population, age, sex, racial/ethnic groups, marital status, dependents, and education. Absent from these categories are statistics on religious preference. Air Force personnel at the Pentagon do maintain these percentages; yet, they do not include them on their own web site that lists a vast array of other statistical groupings. In this and other occasions the military presents a religiously non-descript public face, and, therefore, it would seem unlikely that religion would be an influential force within officers' ranks.

However, within military culture the Air Force embraces and builds upon the concept of civil religion through the unofficial telling and retelling of Air Force lore. Sometimes this lore takes the form of poems, songs, or the remembering of fallen heroes. Via examples taken from the United States Air Force Academy (USAF), nicknamed the "showplace of the Air Force," I argue that the military's unofficial religious practices restrict women's opportunities. Although the unofficial nature of the Air Force's religious narratives indirectly discriminates against women, when these narratives

conflate with flying, feminine shutout is complete.

Rooted in training environments that promise pilots' wings, the shutout process is gradual. First, the military unofficially promotes religion at USAFA, the premier training environment for Air Force officers and, as such, significantly formative in officers' professional development. Second, military aviation adopts religious metaphors to justify military missions. Pilots are, so to speak, the chosen soldiers of God. Finally, through these unofficial narratives the military privileges a pilot's connection to God solely as masculine. Instilled with these notions, the military's unofficial religious narratives reclaim masculinity with every recitation. Military women, subject to the same training regimen as their male counterparts, unknowingly play a large part in fashioning their own exclusion. Regulations and policies officially include women, but the religiously charged masculine narratives exclude them just as quickly from military culture.

Religion's visual presence is keenly felt at the United States Air Force Academy, located in Colorado Springs, Colorado because of its chapel, which is the number two tourist attraction in the state and the leading human-made one. Because it is geographically centered on USAFA's grounds, the chapel also serves as the primary viewing platform for tourists to witness cadet activities. Historically, the chapel was added to the campus's design following Frank Lloyd Wright's criticism that the dormitories and academic buildings ignored the spectacular scenery and setting; they were not uplifting nor inspiring. Need they be? After all, USAFA is a military institution, not Notre Dame; in other words, there is no obvious reason why a chapel should be emblematic of the military, an organization that is officially unreligious.<sup>16</sup> My critique is not that chapels should exist as obscure, drab structures, but that the Academy chapel is

so literally and figuratively likened to *men* who fly. For the Air Force, flying is not just preeminent, but sacred duty. This theological connection between God and military aviation (further) distorts the military's gender norms. Ultimately, women may risk their lives in other professions such as law enforcement, but only men can risk their lives on sacred ground or, as in this case, in sacred airspace. As long as God's mission is flying and flying remains masculine, women are merely tolerated, not incorporated into military service.

Officially, the Air Force Academy does not foster any particular religious affiliation, or even religion itself, among the cadet wing (student body); however, unofficially, religious expectations run high. Religious services and retreats are rare opportunities for relief from the on-going physical and mental rigors of freshmen year, and so cadets are institutionally encouraged to attend them. Worship is viewed as a legitimate use of cadet time, while merely taking time for oneself is not. Grounding what is admittedly an abstract reading about the palpable nature of religious adherence are statistics about the USAFA's religious composition. According to Senior Master Sergeant Walker from USAFA's Chaplain's office, the religious preference of the Academy cadets is 75% Protestant, 24% Catholic, and 1% Other (Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Pantheist). Those cadets who indicate no religious preference, actually 15% of the cadet wing according to Sergeant Walker, are "counted as Protestant."<sup>17</sup> In effect, the Air Force Academy does not recognize "no religious preference." While they are aware of what that percentage is, those cadets are automatically added to the Protestant preference. The grouping is telling. Not only does the story of those cadets who have no religious preference remain statistically untold, but those having no religious preference completely by pass the



equally unsatisfying category of "other," and, statistically, assimilate into the predominant faith, Protestant.

The design of the Air Force Academy chapel also marks Protestantism as the dominant faith; the magnificence of the upper/main floor is devoted to Protestant worship, while the far less inspiring and much smaller lower level houses Catholic and Jewish services. Certainly, the size of the chapel accommodates the religious needs of the cadet community, but, unlike the other USAFA structures built to anticipate expansion, the fixed architecture of the chapel reinscribes the permanence of the military's religious partitioning. Given, then, the religious prevalence and physical permanence of religion, which is subsumed into cadet life, it would seem that religious women could tap into the same power as men. This is an illusion. It is not enough for military women to practice religion, even if it is the militarily popular Protestantism. As long as the visual religious cues and narratives are intimately connected to flying, Air Force women will rarely if ever make the "ultimate sacrifice" by dying in an aircraft.

The sublime power of the chapel sets the stage, literally and figuratively, for other unofficial narratives that maintain Rousseau's sense of civil religious order. As illustrative of just how tightly religious language is woven into the Air Force mission, I have selected the popular narratives "High Flight," "One More Roll," and the Air Force Hymn. By using unofficial narratives such as these, which rely on the tenets of Rousseau's civil religion, the Air Force designs a community in which people not only act the same way, as ensured by the very nature of laws (regulations for the Air Force), but a community in which people will think the same way because they have a moral dimension fashioned by religion. By casting the profession of airmen (the Air Force

refers to all of its members as “airmen”) in terms of religious calling, the social contract is not only encouraged, but becomes a moral obligation. Two additional narratives, the Air Force Song, and “The Coming American,” which I also discuss, specifically posit this moral obligation as designed and maintained only by men.

“High Flight” (Appendix B),<sup>18</sup> a poem recited during countless military occasions, is one of the many unofficial religious narratives printed in *Contrails*, a pocket-sized training text heavily relied upon by new cadets to survive their first year. In the military’s appropriation of it, the poem conflates military flight with the lonely, but awe-inspiring, pilgrimage to “[t]he high untrespassed sanctity of space” where the privileged airman “[p]ut out [his] hand, and touched the face of God.” The poem’s romanticization of flight is not merely idyllic but also religious. Its sentiment erases the harsh realities of flying in combat and the circumstances that warrant military strikes in the first place. As I said, this piece of lore appears as part of a training text for future Air Force officers, but the religious inference does little more than insulate cadets from the harsh realities of the Air Force mission, “to fly, fight, and win.” Far from the poem’s heavenly imagery, such missions usually take place under the duress of war--not with “tumbling mirth,” not through “footless halls of air,” and certainly not with “easy grace.” Yet, for the Air Force, the discursive formation of cadets cannot just be about flying; training programs are designed to foster a religious dimension. Flying, reinforced by a religious subtext, ultimately subjugates women. Men realize a reciprocal empowerment because they can now protect women not only because they feel a general chivalrous need to, but because the suggestion of God in these narratives sanctions their protective duties as both necessary and masculine.

Let me move now from a narrative of glory to one of solemnity: Commander Jerry Coffee's poem, "One More Roll" (Appendix C),<sup>19</sup> commemorates "hearty comrades [w]ho have fallen from the skies." Recited during all formal military dinners, the poem precedes a toast (made with water) to Brigadier General "Billy" Mitchell. The dramatic association of combat pilots with a profession sanctioned by God suggests that even pilots who get shot down remain in a state of grace; they are "gently caught by God's own hands." In this unofficial toast, Air Force members venerate their heroic (male) pilots just as any clergy sanctifies God in a religious service. While this toast is being made, the master of ceremonies calls attention to, not an altar, but a small vacant table set for one, in memory of all prisoners of war who could not be present. The tradition is striking not only because of its solemnity, but because Coffee's closing words define the legacy for others (male pilots and male POWs) to follow: "Take care my friend, watch yourself [A]nd do one more role for me." The legacy service members toast, despite the absence of any particular POW's gender, is pre-figured and commemorated as male.

The first verse of the Air Force Hymn (Appendix D)<sup>20</sup> asks the Lord to "guard and guide the *men* who fly" (my emphasis). God is not only the protector but also the source of military wisdom (guidance). In the second verse God shows support with "tender might" and removes fear as if guarding a young child. By the third verse, God, posited as a skilled pilot, helps his missionary pilots; *he* "Control[s] their minds" and "Grant[s] steadfast eye and hand." God's rhetorical presence in the cockpit becomes one with the pilot's because, as we are led to believe, their missions are in the same. My critique is not just that these narratives egregiously conflate flying with God, but that Air Force pilots occupy a privileged gendered space that invoking religion guarantees them.

Historically, and as an integral part of the military's legacy, these men, and men alone, are the "chosen."

In the Air Force Song (Appendix E)<sup>21</sup> and Samuel Walter Foss' Poem, "The Coming American" (Appendix F),<sup>22</sup> military men do not broach God; they simply are God. The four stanzas of the song tell the flying story from the heightened thrill of combat and the history of airpower to those who "gave their all of old." Clearly, the expectation is that "[f]lying men guarding our nation's borders" will "be there followed by more." The tenacity and spirit embodied by the verse has absolutely nothing to do with women. In the song's second stanza "[m]inds of men," "[h]ands of men," and "[s]ouls of men" create, defend, and expand the Air Force world. Such verse disturbingly parallels God's creation of the world in Genesis; but, of course, even God, unlike the Air Force, creates women.

Among the more publicly controversial narratives is Samuel Walter Foss', "The Coming American." The Air Force Academy displays the poem's first three words, "Bring me men," above a ramp onto the campus's main plaza, a supposed welcoming platform for female as well as male cadets. When initially questioned about the irony of this institutional marquee, given the admission of women back in 1976, the Academy responded by affixing a small plaque on the lower right side of the "Bring me men" ramp, which completes the phrase with the poem's first stanza. The poem (Appendix F)<sup>23</sup> juxtaposes stereotypical masculine might with the elements of Nature. It is mind-boggling that the Academy could think that the complete poem's hopelessly inept verses, which ask men to "tame the tigerish instincts" and "[c]leanse the dragon slime of Nature," would justify the looming "Bring me men" quotation. Far from suggesting any

mythic reverence for flight, Foss' poem asks for men who match "plains," "prairies," "mountains," "forests," "valleys," and "rivers." In fact the third stanza is entirely about ocean, not sky. "Men of oceanic impulse" partake in a metaphorical sexual foray with the "strong pulsation / [o]f the Central Sea" until they "[t]ime their currents to its [the sea's] earth throb." Certainly, Foss' poem is no literary masterpiece; it has nothing to do with flight or airpower; however, in exactly half of its lines it beckons *men*, and that, plain and simply, is the marquee's message.

In any other context, the kinds of narratives I have discussed here would perhaps do little to sway gender ideology. Yet, in a military environment their power for discursive formation soars. Because military training is heavily steeped in tradition, these narratives are not rhetorical window dressing but, instead, are central to military culture. Unofficial though they are, these narratives are the Air Force's training mantras and, as a result, young officer candidates (men and women) accept their military heritage with little to no question. Underpinning these narratives is a body of religious metaphors that conflate flying with serving God and, in doing so, shut out women.

These narratives create even more of a formidable hurdle for women when they resurrect martyrs, particularly military heroes. No story would be complete without its hero, and no religion would be complete without its Deity--the Air Force's unofficial narratives create both for USAFA. Not only does the Air Force Academy appropriate Protestant religious imagery to sanctify the mission and the profession, but it also appropriates religious terminology to canonize one of its own heroes. Historically, other national heroes, such as George Washington, also have been cast in a religious light. Mason L. Weems' famous portrayal of George Washington as the American Moses has

not escaped the notice of critics, but among Weems' supporters is Marcus Cunliffe, who defends Weems' portrayal as part of a larger persuasive narrative. Cunliffe fends off those critical of Weems because, as he suggests, Weems gave the public a story it wanted to hear:

So it is wrong to suppose that Weems on his own determined the nation's view of George Washington. The American public demanded to be told of a Washington who was a 'human angil [sic]'----spotless, pious, dauntless. Along with many others, Weems helped to supply the demand.<sup>24</sup>

The Air Force Academy answered a similar demand with its own "saint"—Captain Lance P. Sijan.

On 4 March 1976, President Gerald R. Ford awarded the Medal of Honor to Sijan posthumously for his extraordinary heroism. Sijan had been shot down over North Vietnam and, subsequently, became a prisoner of war in Hanoi. He was the first Academy graduate (Class of '65) to be awarded the Medal of Honor. As one of the Academy's own heroes, Sijan quickly became a part of the institution's heritage and, as such, incorporated into the school's training regimen. USAFA cadets spend the majority of their first year in training, a large portion of which includes, but is not limited to, mastering the (unskilled) skills of rote memorization. Cadets robotically recite names and accomplishments of Air Force greats (men only), and among them is the Academy's first Medal of Honor winner, Lance *P.* Sijan (with emphasis on his complete name). However, more meaningful training narratives such as Sijan's legacy are not just memorized like lists of names and quotations; they are internalized. There's no telling just how often a name has to be heard or seen for it to register, but Sijan's presence is

ubiquitous. Despite the fact that Sijan was in the Class of '65, the repetition of his unofficial narrative offers a sense of him as an alive, contemporary peer among men and women, but only discursively connected to men.

As a model for all cadets, Lance P. Sijan officially eases the sting of Vietnam even for those who are not old enough to remember. Unofficially, Sijan's legacy is rooted in religious discourse that resurrects his life for far more self-serving reasons. In his *Voices of the Vietnam POWs*, Craig Howes considers Sijan's religious portrayal as particularly illustrative of how POW military myths have recreated history and influenced national memories:

*Into the Mouth of the Cat* thus presents Lance Sijan as a typically American saint. Because of the unique circumstances of his life and death made all charges of fanaticism ridiculous, in Hanoi Sijan could serve as a pristine symbol for those ideals which the senior POWs tried to instill in the other prisoners. Like Jesus, Lance Sijan was both an anomaly and the essence of an official story. And also like Jesus, his suffering, death and virtual deification were so uncontaminated by self-interest that his blood can be offered as evidence to all who question the justice of his cause.<sup>25</sup>

First and foremost, Sijan's saintly blood is offered to USAFA cadets who tacitly consent to this liturgy by their very attendance at USAFA, an institution that quite literally houses Sijan's memory. One of the two cadet dormitories is Sijan Hall; daily, cadets pass a wall-size portrait of Sijan; Sijan's name is read at parades, football games, and other ceremonial activities; and, on the second floor of Sijan Hall near the barber shop (a frequent stop for male cadets) and the cadet activities office, there is a large display case

of Sijan memorabilia (his clothing, letters, and car keys). The degree to which cadets incorporate Lance P. Sijan into their culture makes him more than a legacy that invites participation--he is the center of an active religious faith.

A recent video production about Medal of Honor winner Lance P. Sijan reconstructs Sijan as a pure, self-sacrificing, all-American-boy-turned-hero, mirroring the image cast in his biography, *Into the Mouth of the Cat*. Yet, unlike the text, which does mention his girlfriend, on-screen Sijan appears woman-free. The only woman (portrayed) in the video is Sijan's mother. The absence of women not only assures Sijan's purity, but it fashions, once again, the hero as distinctly male, a Christ-like male. Striking is the way in which Sijan's ordeal, as captured by the film, parallels the suffering of Christ. Via a series of drawings, which trace Sijan from his shredded flight suit and bearded-face to his tortured existence as a POW, the film blatantly appropriates the Christ-figure image. Such emphasis on Christ, I believe, is designed to keep women marginalized with no chance of ever occupying what has become a heroic-suffering-saint persona. Women are not even worthy to comment on Sijan's life, as suggested by footage of interviews with only male cadets about their aspirations to be Sijan-like pilots. Essentially, there is no room for female cadets to identify with their alma mater's hero, and of greater consequence is the realization that although military women have survived as POWs, the military has no discursive space for such earthbound sisterly saints.

### **Part Three: Apostles or Citizens?**

Given that the military is a microcosm of society, then it is only logical that the unofficial religious discourse, so prevalent at the Air Force Academy, is also buttressed by religious narratives within American culture. Admittedly, Lance P. Sijan's story, as



saturated as it is with religious tropes, resonates primarily with Academy graduates and other Air Force personnel, but scarcely with those who are not affiliated with the military. Yet, as I have discussed, the inherent value in studying Sijan's story is not only as an example of how a myth is perpetuated at the expense of history, but, more specifically, as an example of how the religious nature of that myth continues at the expense of military women. As long as military aviation remains appropriate only for God-abiding-men, military women are, in effect, the lame ducks of a combative Air Force. However, when unofficial military narratives find their way into a national, not Academy specific, discourse, the issue for military women concerns citizenship as well as service. In the discussion that follows, I turn to military narratives of national interest, their religious subtext, and how military service couched in terms of religion subjugates women to the role of "supportive" citizen.

I have selected two narratives, Captain Scott O'Grady's *Return With Honor* and Colin Powell's *My American Journey*, as illustrative of how religious discourse when appropriated by national military (male) figures reinscribes serving God, not necessarily our nation. They each function slightly differently, yet they claim the same effect. O'Grady's narrative egregiously conflates religion with flying. As an American hero he speaks not only to the military but to the nation because he represents the best officership and citizenship have to offer. Powell's text also gestures to religion, but does not directly discuss issues of gender. However, what is significant about Powell's religious inferences is that a man of status who is both as a high-ranking military member *and* an upstanding citizen speaks them. The connection masks the religious overtones as not only accepted (by the military) but expected. In armed forces that, again, are supposed to

remain religiously neutral, O'Grady and Powell are examples of active duty military members who openly espouse their love of God in national public forums and do so completely unchallenged. The military's tacit sanctioning of religious discourse as an acceptable and encouraged rhetorical mode for soldiers sanctions Christianity's patriarchal dominance, which, even if it were not designed to, still results in the exclusion of women. My contention is that the pairing of God and military service on a national stage further undermines women's opportunities not only to "fly, fight, and win," but also needlessly restricts women's rights as citizens to participate in the protection and defense of their country. Civilian women have a greater chance of attaining civil rights than their military counterparts because to do so, they do not have to wage a religious crusade.

Discursively, U.S. Air Force Captain Scott O'Grady is the Lance P. Sijan who lived. On June 2, 1995, O'Grady was shot down while flying his F-16 over Bosnia. He tells his six-day survival story in *Return with Honor* and in a children's version, *Basher Five-Two*. There are many reasons to criticize harshly both texts, but I direct my comments to the former. Among its shortcomings, *Return with Honor* suffers from extremely poor writing and blame-free rhetoric (because heroes, as the subtext suggests, can do no wrong). There is also the staged, over-dramatization of the single tear rolling down O'Grady's cheek during the stress and strain of near capture: "A great sadness welled over me, and soundlessly I cried. I felt a single tear track down my cheek and into the dirt. It was the first and last tear I'd allow myself in Bosnia."<sup>26</sup> I refer to such moments of emotions held at bay, which appear frequently in military narratives, as the "single tear trope." The tear suggests just enough vulnerability for O'Grady's humanness to shine through without compromising his masculine construction. If a woman shed such a tear,

I doubt it would be depicted as heroic.

However, what is most disturbing about O'Grady's narrative is the way in which he evokes God to rationalize his war-fighting purpose and, therefore, his deserved protection from the enemy. He opens his text by thanking God "for the gift of another shot at life" and with the unofficial religious poem "High Flight" (Appendix B), which, as I discussed earlier, equates flying with touching the face of God. Thereafter, religious references inundate O'Grady's story. He describes the moment the missile hits his aircraft as a "murderous *bang* that swallowed [him] whole, like the whale that got Jonah."<sup>27</sup> From the ensuing explosion, he is "reborn in the air."<sup>28</sup> Also, presented in *Italics* throughout the narrative is O'Grady's on-going conversation with God. Certainly it is not unusual that this pilot in his darkest moments would turn to his personal religious beliefs; but O'Grady fashions God as a fellow soldier, a presence designed to protect him because he *believes*. When two Bosnian soldiers miss seeing him in his hiding spot, O'Grady "can't explain it, except to say that God veiled [him] from them."<sup>29</sup> God literally aids the cause of the U.S. Armed Forces, or so the God-fearing male pilot would have us believe.

God may have saved O'Grady but not his narrative. The frequent references in his religiously-minded text, which include squadron mottoes (specifically the title of his book),<sup>30</sup> the summoning of Lance P. Sijan's memory to put O'Grady's "predicament into some perspective,"<sup>31</sup> and the cross necklace his sister gave him,<sup>32</sup> which acts as a kind of double insurance to save his life, are more than any reader should have to bear.

O'Grady's religious mantra culminates in a vision:

And then I shut my eyes, and something happened to make me realize that I wasn't outnumbered, after all---that I had more allies than I could count. I

prayed, and I wasn't solo. I had joined a huge chorus: I could hear prayers for me and throughout the world, from my family to the most remote, faceless stranger. There were no barriers of language, or politics or even religion. There was only a rising tide of unity, and caring, and belief.<sup>33</sup>

Such idyllic and harmonious babble more closely resembles the speeches given by Miss America pageant finalists than POWs. There is no discursive redemption here.

As O'Grady would have us believe, all experiences come through flight and through God: "In Bosnia I caught a glimpse of God's love, and it was the most incredible experience of my life. I'd tapped into the brightest, most joyous feeling; I felt warmed by an everlasting flame. For all my physical complaints, I'd been on a spiritual high since that missile and I intersected."<sup>34</sup> Describing the phallic missile as affording him "the most incredible experience of his life," O'Grady feminizes himself at the moment of the attack. I introduce the feminine in what has been, until now, a discussion predominately situated on religious examples, because the subtle forms of women's subjugation are obfuscated by religion. O'Grady's text is so religiously charged and women are so markedly absent, as from other Air Force narratives, that even indirect references to women are born of this religious link. In another example of the feminine appropriation, O'Grady's rescue turns him into a surrogate parent: "At the time of the shootdown, a good friend of mine was late into her pregnancy. When she got the news that I'd been picked up, it sent her straight into labor; she delivered before I reached Aviano."<sup>35</sup> O'Grady suggests his friend's childbirth celebrates *his* highly masculinized accomplishments. In these examples, the feminine participates in war in terms of sexual vulnerability, albeit romanticized, or the feminine opts out of war via motherhood. There

is no room for women in the military's monastic order to exist as anything but facilitators for male orgasms or as child-bearers.

Similar to O'Grady's narrative, Powell's text is ultimately based on Rousseau's dogmas--control (social order) and a belief in God; however, Powell's *My American Journey* has much more rhetorical weight than O'Grady's. Essentially, Powell draws extensively on the legacy of presidential speeches, which have a familiar national appeal to Americans. Let me turn, first, to the narratives of American leadership and how the notion of civil religion resides in them.

Every Presidential inaugural address, with the exception of Washington's second, mentions not "Jesus," not "Christ," but the more generic "God" or "Great Author."<sup>36</sup> Some critics cast the most religiously outspoken of Presidents (Washington, Lincoln, and Kennedy) as the Trinity: Washington, the American Moses, is the Father; Lincoln, primarily because of his second inaugural address, is the Son; and Kennedy, venerated through the eternal flame, is the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup> Presidents find a need to call upon God, not merely as a measure of comfort in times of crisis, but to conflate the United States' mission with God's, thereby convincing the American public that they are one in the same. Suzanne Daughton's extensive work on Franklin Delano Roosevelt finds his use of religious and military metaphors in his inaugural address so persuasive that they form "a single integrated image of holy war."<sup>38</sup> America's current President continues the religious tradition by referring to some of the identical Biblical passages cited by his predecessors. In Bill Clinton's July 1992 speech accepting the Democratic nomination, he criticizes George Bush, as someone who did not appreciate the need for an American vision, by quoting Scripture: "Where there is no vision the people must perish";

Roosevelt used the exact same passage to critique bankers.<sup>39</sup>

As a genre, Presidential inaugural addresses have other salient characteristics. They are both timely and timeless. Their contents may differ but their functions are similar; inaugural addresses calm, unite, justify, inspire, conflate the religious with the secular, evoke sacredness, provide a vision for the future that honors the past, and, perhaps most significantly, these speeches have the power to edit what will become a very important piece of American history. It is time for that history to include women.

The military is a unique audience for speeches given by this nation's Presidents. Military members respond to the President as their Commander-in-Chief; yet, as powerful and persuasive as presidential speeches can be, senior military members who have the ear of the President are far more likely to have the attention of the armed forces. Military service members see Colin Powell as a fellow comrade-in-arms for two reasons: he wears the uniform and he has been formed, as they have, by the military experience. He is, then, what I consider a bridge between someone whose meaning resides completely within military culture and someone who has a powerful civilian presence. Although some critics would argue otherwise because of his prestigious military career, Colin Powell's autobiography is unofficial because it does not influence the rights and privileges of citizens. However, I believe that the weight of his words overrides the military's official absence of religion. Essentially, Powell's very political (civilian) and highly respected military persona make him a very different kind of discursive model.

Powell's story is clearly a military one. In the selection quoted in Appendix G,<sup>40</sup> Powell unites his audience by expressing his love for "*our* country" and "*our* people" and "*our* virtues" (my emphasis). By first marginalizing the low points of the nation's past,

he offers a vision of utopia. So, it does not matter that “we are a fractious nation,” nor that America has seen its share of assassinations and resignations because we are “always hopeful” and “we came roaring back.” The repetition of “[w]e will” at the beginning of many of the sentences further shows unity, resolve, and vision. National unity is actually all the stronger because of America’s diversity. In other words, because we are a “*diverse* American society” which has the “the strength, hardiness, and resilience of the *hybrid* plant” (my emphasis), and because the nation unites despite these differences, the unity is indeed a noteworthy achievement--a sacred treasure. His narrative directly parallels the official narratives outlined in my discussion of America’s Presidents.

As if Powell’s words were from a prefabricated Rousseauian script, he too relies heavily on a presumed national belief in God and, not just duty, but *sacred* duty. Citizens who support this duty have every reason to anticipate glory because the nation will “prevail,” the nation will “come through,” and the nation will “continue to flourish.” However, the last and most compelling reason on Powell’s visionary list is that the nation “will make it because we know we are *blessed*, and we will not throw away *God’s* gift to us” (my emphasis). So, when he lauds the “political system of genius” that “our fathers bequeathed” to us, Powell is invoking an obligation owed to the nation because of this sacred heritage. In his closing paragraph, Powell reasserts the Presidential legacy by quoting Jefferson’s concept of duty, a “debt of service,” that, as Jefferson says, all Americans owe in proportion to that which they have received. Powell’s claims of never being “entirely free” of a debt he feels “heavily” taken in conjunction with his race suggest a trace image of bondage. The image is quickly dismissed when Powell lets his audience know that this is a burden he chooses and one that he is more than willing to

bear because "he has received so much from his country." Notions of duty and obligation that are couched in terms of repaying sacred gifts from God also resurrect masculinized images of citizenship. Therefore, Powell's belief that "[w]e are self-correcting" means little to military women because that self is already and always male.

### **Conclusion**

Consistent with Rousseau's tenets, the military is one community which, through the power of its unofficial narratives, offers a high degree of control and reverence for God. The combination of the two concepts in a military environment models Rousseau's civil religion, particularly the religion of the citizen which "teaches civil and religious obedience, in other words, teaches citizens that duty to their country fulfills duty to God, to die for one's country is also to die a martyr."<sup>41</sup> Ironically, the military, an organization regulated by religious neutrality, has become the unofficial repository for America's religious culture. Narratives at the Air Force Academy and other POW/high visibility narratives recognized by the civilian culture emphasize religion at the expense of military women.

Discursively, as Suzanne Daughton, harshly but truthfully, points out, the military most resembles religion when it does not think critically because "the script [war] is so preset that it is self-justifying, and therein lie its seductive possibilities for rhetors. . . . neither religion nor the military encourages free, critical thought in its 'laity' or 'enlisted personnel' (namely the vast majority of the American public)."<sup>42</sup> I agree. The military's ability to think critically will not materialize unless religion takes a back seat to issue of equality, for only then is there the hope that religious teachings that find their way into unofficial Air Force narratives *will not* reinscribe officership as male. Religious



narratives prove to be essential elements for establishing gender-coded terms in the military; unfortunately, military women, as *women* who have no foothold in the power of religious rhetoric, will never be fully accepted into the military's "happy few . . . band of brothers."<sup>43</sup>

## Notes to Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup> Jeanne Holm, *Women in the Military An Unfinished Revolution* (California: Presidio Press, 1982) 342.

<sup>2</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, 21 May 95 (qtd in Judith Hicks Stiehm, "The Civilian Mind," *It's Our Military Too! Women and the U.S. Military*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996) 292.

<sup>3</sup> J.J. Rousseau Rousseau, *On the Social Contract or Principles of Political Right*. ed. Roger D. Masters. trans. Judith R. Masters (New York: St Martin's Press, 1978) 131.

<sup>4</sup> Hilail Gildin, *Rousseau's Social Contract* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) 182.

<sup>5</sup> Rousseau 131.

<sup>6</sup> Rousseau 131.

<sup>7</sup> Rousseau 130.

<sup>8</sup> Rousseau 128.

<sup>9</sup> Rousseau 130.

<sup>10</sup> Diane Fourny, "Rousseau's Civil Religion Reconsidered," *The French Review* (1987): 486.

<sup>11</sup> Gildin 176.

<sup>12</sup> Rousseau 128.

<sup>13</sup> Rousseau 127.

<sup>14</sup> Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* (1988): 104.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.afpc.af.mil> (Demographic one-liners for active duty personnel)

<sup>16</sup> Ironically, the headquarters of Focus on the Family, a predominant religious group that preaches Christian morality and family values, sits directly across the interstate highway from USAFA.

<sup>17</sup> Senior Master Sergeant Walker. Telephone Interview. May 29, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> *Contrails* United States Air Force Academy Cadet Handbook 41 (1995-1996) 183.

<sup>19</sup> *Contrails* 47.

<sup>20</sup> *Contrails* 182.

<sup>21</sup> *Contrails* 180-181.

<sup>22</sup> *Contrails* 36-37.

<sup>23</sup> *Contrails* 36-37.

<sup>24</sup> Mason L. Weems, *The Life of Washington*, ed. Marcus Cunliffe (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962) xlv.

<sup>25</sup> Craig Howes, *Voices of the Vietnam POWs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 187.

<sup>26</sup> Scott O'Grady, *Return with Honor* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995) 83.

<sup>27</sup> O'Grady 24.

<sup>28</sup> O'Grady 29.

<sup>29</sup> O'Grady 79.

<sup>30</sup> O'Grady 100.

<sup>31</sup> O'Grady 101.

<sup>32</sup> O'Grady 118.

<sup>33</sup> O'Grady 99.

<sup>34</sup> O'Grady 128.

<sup>35</sup> O'Grady 183.

<sup>36</sup> Bellah 104.

<sup>37</sup> John F. Wilson, *Public Religion in American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979) 4.

<sup>38</sup> Suzanne M. Daughton, "Metaphorical Transcendence: Images of the Holy War in Franklin Roosevelt's First Inaugural," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Nov. 1993: 427.

<sup>39</sup> Daughton 442.

<sup>40</sup> Colin L. Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995) 612.

<sup>41</sup> Fourny 489.

<sup>42</sup> Daughton 440.

<sup>43</sup> William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 4.3.60.

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## Appendix A

## Air Force Officers' Reading List

## Basic List

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Sun Tzu.                           | <i>The Art of War</i>                  |
| Meilinger, Phillip.                | <i>10 Propositions</i>                 |
| Stokesbury, James.                 | <i>A Short History of Air Power</i>    |
| Phillips, Donald.                  | <i>Lincoln on Leadership</i>           |
| Wolfe, Tom.                        | <i>The Right Stuff</i>                 |
| Hudson, James.                     | <i>Hostile Skies</i>                   |
| Copp, DeWitt.                      | <i>A Few Great Captains</i>            |
| Perret, Geoffrey.                  | <i>Winged Victory</i>                  |
| Sherwood, John.                    | <i>Officers in Flight Suits</i>        |
| Fehrenbach, T.R.                   | <i>This Kind of War</i>                |
| Broughton, Jack.                   | <i>Thud Ridge</i>                      |
| Reynolds, Richard.                 | <i>Heart of the Storm</i>              |
| Moore, Harold and Joseph Galloway. | <i>We Were Soldiers Once and Young</i> |

## Intermediate List

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Paret, Peter.     | <i>Makers of Modern Strategy</i>         |
| Mason, Tony.      | <i>Air Power: A Centennial Appraisal</i> |
| Kenney, George C. | <i>General Kenny Reports</i>             |
| Slayton, Donald.  | <i>Deke!</i>                             |
| Kennett, Lee.     | <i>The First Air War</i>                 |
| Hughes, Thomas.   | <i>Over Lord</i>                         |

|                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Futrell, Frank.                      | <i>USAF in Korea</i>             |
| Clodfelter, Mark.                    | <i>The Limits of Airpower</i>    |
| Hallion, Richard.                    | <i>Storm Over Iraq</i>           |
| Advanced List                        |                                  |
| Clausewitz, Carl von.                | <i>On War</i>                    |
| Holley, I.B.                         | <i>Ideas and Weapons</i>         |
| Belasco, James and Ralph Stayer.     | <i>Flight of the Buffalo</i>     |
| McDougall, Walter.                   | <i>The Heaven and the Earth</i>  |
| Fredette, Ray.                       | <i>The Sky on Fire</i>           |
| Overy, R.J.                          | <i>Why the Allies Won</i>        |
| Meilinger, Phillip.                  | <i>Hoyt Vandenberg</i>           |
| Sharp, Ulysses.                      | <i>Strategy for Defeat</i>       |
| Beaumont, Roger.                     | <i>Joint Military Operations</i> |
| Winnefeld, James and Dana Johnson.   | <i>Joint Air Operations</i>      |
| Gordon, Michael and Bernard Trainor. | <i>The Generals' War</i>         |
| Warden, John.                        | <i>The Air Campaign</i>          |

## Appendix B

## HIGH FLIGHT

“Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth  
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;  
Sunward I’ve climbed and joined the tumbling mirth  
Of sun-split clouds--and done a hundred things  
You have not dreamed of--wheeled and soared and swung  
High in the sunlit silence. Hovering there  
I’ve chased the shouting wind along and flung  
My eager craft through footless halls of air.  
Up, up the long delirious, burning blue  
I’ve topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace,  
where never lark, or even eagle flew;  
and, while with silent, lifting mind I’ve trod  
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,  
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.”

## Appendix C

## Toast to Brigadier General William "Billy" Mitchell

"A tradition arising from our prisoners of war, water will be used for this toast. The toast was written for and in the prisoner of war camps of Hanoi, where wine was not an available luxury. Please join us in honoring our prisoners of war with this toast."

## One More Roll

--by Commander Jerry Coffee, Hanoi, 1968

We toast our hearty comrades  
Who have fallen from the skies  
And were gently caught by God's own hands  
To be with Him on high.

To dwell among the soaring clouds  
They knew so well before  
From dawn patrol and victory roll  
At heaven's very door.

And as we fly among them there  
We're sure to hear their plea--

"Take care my friend, watch yourself  
And do one more roll . . . just for me."

## Appendix D

## THE AIR FORCE HYMN

## I

"Lord, guard and guide the men who fly  
Through the great spaces of the sky;  
Be with them traversing the air  
In darkening storms or sunshine fair.

## II

You who support with tender might  
The balanced birds in all their flight,  
Lord of the tempered winds, be near,  
That, having you, they know no fear.

## III

Control their minds with instinct fit  
Whene'er, adventuring they quit  
The firm security of land;  
Grant steadfast eye and skillful hand.

## IV

Aloft in solitudes of space,  
Uphold them with your saving grace.  
O God, protect the men who fly  
Through lonely ways beneath the sky."

## Appendix E

## THE AIR FORCE SONG

## I

Off we go into the wild blue yonder,  
Climbing high into the sun:  
Here they come zooming to meet our thunder,  
*At 'em boys, giv'er the gun!*  
Down we dive spouting our flame from under,  
Off with one hell-uv-a-roar!  
We live in fame or go down in flame,  
Nothing'll stop the US Air Force!

## II

*Minds of men* fashioned a crate of thunder,  
Sent it high into the blue;  
*Hands of men* blasted world asunder,  
How they lived God only knew!  
*Souls of men* dreaming of skies to conquer  
Gave us wing, ever to soar.  
With Scouts before and bombers galore,  
Nothing can stop the US Air Force!

## III

Here is a toast to the host of those who love the vastness of the sky,  
To a friend we send the message of his *brother men who fly*.



We drink to those who gave their all of old,  
Then down we roar to score the rainbow's pot of gold.

A toast to the host of the men we boast,

The US Air Force.

IV

Off we go into the wild sky yonder,

Keep the wings level and true!

If you'd live to be a gray-haired wonder,

Keep the nose out of the blue!

*Flying men* guarding our nation's borders,

We'll be there followed by more.

In echelon we carry on!

Nothing'll stop the US Air Force.

(my emphasis)

## Appendix F

## THE COMING AMERICAN

by Samual Walter Foss

Bring me men to match my mountains;

Bring me men to match my plains,

Men with empires in their purpose,

And new eras in their brains.

Bring me men to match my prairies,

Men to match my inland seas,

Men whose thought shall pave a highway

Up to ampler destinies;

Pioneers to clear Thoughts's marshlands,

And to cleanse old Error's fen;

Bring me men to match my mountains –

Bring me men!

Bring me men to match my forests,

Strong to fight the storm and blast,

Branching toward the skyey future,

Rooted in the fertile past.

Bring me men to match my valleys,

Tollerant of sun and snow,

Men within whose fruitful purpose

Time's consummate blooms shall grow.  
Men to tame the tigerish instincts  
Of the lair and cave and den,  
Cleanse the dragon slime of Nature \_  
Bring me men!

Bring me men to match my rivers,  
Continent cleavers, flowing free,  
Drawn by the eternal madness  
To be mingled with the sea;  
Men of oceanic impulse,  
Men whose moral currents sweep  
Toward the wide-infolding ocean  
Of an undiscovered deep;  
Men who feel the strong pulsation  
Of the Central Sea, and then  
Time their currents to its earth throb –  
Bring me men!

## Appendix G

"My travels since leaving the Army two years ago have deepened my love for our country and our people. It is a love full of pride for our virtues and with patience for our failing. We are a fractious nation, always searching, always dissatisfied, and yet always hopeful. We have an infinite capacity to rejuvenate ourselves. We are self-correcting. And we are capable of caring about each other. In this season of our discontent, I find it heartening to look back. Remember during the sixties and seventies when people wondered how we could survive the assassinations of John, Martin, and Bobby, and a war that tore us apart, riots in front of the White House, and the resignations in disgrace of a Vice President and a President? Some counted us out, another once great empire in terminal decline. But we came roaring back, while other empires fell instead. We will prevail over our present trials. We will come through because our founders bequeathed us a political system of genius, a system flexible enough for all ages and inspiring noble aspirations for all time. We will continue to flourish because our diverse American society has the strength, hardiness, and resilience of the hybrid plant we are. We will make it because we know we are blessed, and we will not throw away God's gift to us.

Jefferson once wrote, 'There is a debt of service due from every man of his country, proportioned to the bounties which nature and fortune have measured to him.' As one who has received so much from his country, I feel that debt heavily, and I can never be entirely free of it. My responsibility, our responsibility as lucky Americans, is to try to give back to this country as much as it has given to us, as we continue our American journey together."

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DISSERTATION

"Leadership by Design: The Gendered Construction of Military (Air Force) Officers"  
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TEACHING INTERESTS

Renaissance, 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Literature, and Cultural/Gender Studies

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Instructor of English at the United States Air Force Academy, 1994-1996  
Advanced Composition  
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CONFERENCE PAPERS

"'Officerspeak': Linguistic Power in Military Education," Annual Conference on  
College Composition and Communication (CCCC), April 1998.

PUBLICATIONS

Review of *Behind the Lines: International Short Stories of War* by Pauletta Otis  
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